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BOSTON—L. C. BOWLES.

WOMAN,

IN HER

SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC CHARACTER.

BY MRS. JOHN SANDFORD.

FROM THE LONDON EDITION.

BOSTON:
LEONARD C. BOWLES.
1833.

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TO THE ENGLISH EDITION.

The title of the following pages is, perhaps, their best plea to the indulgence of the reader. It at least embraces a subject which will be regarded as strictly appropriate to a female pen; and it is hoped that this circumstance may be admitted as at once an apology and a recommendation.

Of course the authoress has written exclusively for her own sex; and to them would she respectfully commit her little book. Happy shall she be, should it meet with the approbation of those of whom she ever wishes to be the humble follower: happier still, should it tend to recommend their principles and example to others.

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TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

A copy of this book was imported by a gentleman who had seen extracts from it in an English review. By him it was lent to a friend who was so much pleased with it that he obtained permission to put the copy into the printer's hands. This is the history of its republication in this country. The writer is unknown to those who have taken an interest in bringing the book before American readers. It is believed that it will do good, and therefore has been reprinted. The English copy has been followed without the slightest alteration. Some of the remarks are evidently designed for a class of society that can hardly be said to exist among us, but they cannot lessen the value of the work to any one. The freedom from extravagance, the practical wisdom,

the religious sentiment, and the elegance of style which mark its pages recommend it to perusal. That elegance has sometimes been sought at the expense of simplicity, or that many important topics are passed in silence, need not prevent its affording pleasure and instruction. Let American ' woman ' cultivate the refinement of mind and manners which is here portrayed, and she will augment her resources of happiness and usefulness.

Boston, Dec. 1, 1832.

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ON WOMAN.

CHAPTER I.

CAUSES OF FEMALE INFLUENCE.

Time is, in many ways, a reformer. It produces the same kind of change in the opinions of men as familiarity does in their feelings; it has a tendency to do away with superstition, and to reduce every thing to its real worth.

It is thus that the remains of the feudal system are every where disappearing,—that there is so much less of chivalrous feeling than there once was,—and that men act now, not so much from impulse, as from conviction.

It is thus, also, that the sentiment for woman has undergone a change. The romantic passion, which once almost deified her, is on the decline; and it is by intrinsic qualities that she

must now inspire respect. There is less of enthusiasm entertained for her, but the regard is more rational, and, perhaps, equally sincere; since it is in relation to happiness that she is principally appreciated.

Domestic comfort is the chief source of her influence, and the greatest debt society owes her; for happiness is almost an element of virtue, and nothing conduces more to improve the character of men than domestic peace. A woman may make a man's home delightful, and may thus increase his motives for virtuous exertion. She may refine and tranquillise his mind,—may turn away his anger or allay his grief. Her smile may be the happy influence to gladden his heart, and to disperse the cloud that gathers on his brow. And she will be loved in proportion as she makes those around her happy,—as she studies their tastes, and sympathises in their feelings. In social relations adaptation is therefore the true secret of her influence.

Where want of congeniality impairs domestic comfort, the fault is generally chargeable on

the female side; for it is for woman, not for man, to make the sacrifice, especially in indifferent matters. She must, in a certain degree, be plastic herself if she would mould others. And this is one reason why very good women are sometimes very uninfluential. They do a great deal, but they yield nothing; they are impassible themselves, and therefore they cannot affect others. They proceed so mechanically in their vocation, and are so frigid to every thing beyond it, that their very virtue seems automatical, and is uninteresting because it appears compulsory. Negative goodness, therefore, is not enough. With an imperturbable temper, a faultless economy, an irreproachable demeanor, a woman may be still far from engaging, and her discharge of family relations be compatible with much domestic dulness. And the danger is lest this dryness alienate affection which sympathy might have secured, and nullify an influence which might otherwise have been really beneficial. To be useful a woman must have feeling. It is this which suggests the thousand nameless amenities

which fix her empire in the heart, and render her so agreeable, and almost so necessary, that she imperceptibly rises in the domestic circle, and becomes at once its cement and its charm.

If it be then really her wish to increase her hold on the affections, and to mature the sentiment which passion may have excited, let her not forget that nothing conduces more to these results than congeniality. Perhaps conjugal virtue was never more aptly panegyrised than in the following eulogy on a matron of the last century:—'She was a lady of such symmetrical proportion to her husband, that they seemed to come together by a sort of natural magnetism.'

Domestic life is a woman's sphere, and it is there that she is most usefully as well as most appropriately employed. But society, too, feels her influence, and owes to her, in great measure, its balance and its tone. She may be here a corrective of what is wrong, a moderator of what is unruly, a restraint on what is indecorous. Her presence may be a pledge against impropriety and excess, a check on vice, and a protection to virtue.

And it is her delicacy which will secure to her such an influence, and enable her to maintain it. It is the policy of licentiousness to undermine where it cannot openly attack, and to weaken by stratagem what it may not rudely assail. But a delicate woman will be as much upon her guard against the insidious as against the direct assault, and will no more tolerate the innuendo than the avowal. She will shrink from the licentiousness which is couched in ambiguous phrase or veiled in covert allusion, and from the immorality which, though it may not offend the ear, is meant to corrupt the heart. And though a depraved taste may relish the condiments of vice, or an unscrupulous palate receive them without detection, her virtue will be too sensitive not to reject the poison, and to recoil spontaneously from the touch.

Delicacy is, indeed, the point of honor in woman. And her purity of manner will ensure to her deference, and repress, more effectually than any other influence, impropriety of every kind. A delicate woman, too, will be more loved, as well as more respected, than any other; for affection can scarcely be excited,

and certainly cannot long subsist, unless it is founded on esteem.

Yet such delicacy is neither prudish nor insipid. Conversation, for instance, is one great source of a woman's influence; and it is her province, and her peculiar talent, to give zest to it. She is, and ought to be, the enlivener of society: if she restrains impropriety, she may promote cheerfulness; and it is not because her conversation is innocent that it need therefore be dull. The sentiment of woman contributes much to social interest: her feeling imparts life, and her gentleness a polish.

It is not, however, by effort that she will succeed, nor by mere volubility that she will render herself agreeable. Some women seem to think time lost when they are not talking; — and whether it be mere worldly tittle-tattle, or insipid sentimentalism in which they indulge, they are equally impatient of listening, and equally anxious to engross. But soliloquising is not conversation. In woman, too, an attempt at display is always disagreeable, and even brilliancy will not atone for it. It is thought bad enough for her to write octavos,—

what must be thought of her if she speaks folios?

The charm of conversation is feeling; forgetting oneself, and sympathising with others. It is not to shine, but to please, that a woman should desire, and she will do so only when she is graceful and unaffected,—when her wish is not so much to be admired as to contribute to the gratification of others.

And, for this purpose, she must bring into society heart and mind. The one will teach her how to feel for those around her, the other how to adapt herself to them, and both will greatly contribute to her agreeableness. The insipidity of some women is attributable more to want of interest than of capacity. It is not because they have nothing to say that they say nothing, nor because they are deficient that they are trifling. They sometimes do not trouble themselves to be agreeable. They think that, if they look pretty, and are inoffensive, they fulfil their part; and they glide through life like tame animals, and are almost as indolent and as selfish. It is well, if when they cease to be ornamental, they do not become as troublesome.

A woman should always do her utmost to please; and an expression of interest is often sufficient. To be a good listener, and to reply with ease, good sense, and good breeding, are the most requisite qualities for an agreeable companion: but the sealed lips, the vacant stare, and the abrupt transition, are equally rude and disappointing.

This indifference is inexcusable in those whose talent for conversation might be so easily improved. English women are proverbially silent: yet there is no reason why they should be so; nor why, because they are exemplary at home, they should be insipid in society. It is their boast that their education is superior; it is then the more to their discredit, when it fails in what is surely an important result. And if men are too apt to retire to themselves, — if *they* talk of politics and the chase, whilst dress and tittle-tattle are discussed upon the sofa,— may not their exclusiveness be, in great measure, attributable to the bad grace with which they are too frequently received? Might not the *gaucherie* of the one, and the insipidity of the other circle, be often much relieved by a little more sympathy between them?

Again, to be agreeable, a woman must avoid egotism. It is no matter how superior she is, she will never be liked, if she talks chiefly of herself. The impression of her own importance can convey no pleasure to others: on the contrary, as a desire for distinction is always mutual, a sense of inferiority must be depressing.

If we would converse pleasingly, we must endeavor to set others at ease: and it is not by flattery that we can succeed in doing so, but by a courteous and kind address, which delicately avoids all needless irritation, and endeavors to infuse that good humor of which it is itself the result.

In woman this is a Christian duty. How often should they suppress their own claims rather than interfere with those of others! How often should they employ their talent in developing that of their associates, and not for its own display! How invariably should they discard pretension, and shun even the appearance of conceit; and seek to imbibe the spirit of that lovely religion, of which sympathy is the characteristic feature, and humility the pre-eminent grace!

It is in this way that accomplishment contributes to the agreeableness of woman. The encouragement and cultivation of art seems, indeed, appropriate to her. Yet, perhaps, there is nothing in which she oftener errs. In this, as in other things, affectation spoils all. There is a theatrical manner about some women, which, to say the least of it, is an outrage upon taste. The gestures of the stage can never be appropriate in a private circle, nor are they becoming a modest female. She may copy the skill, but surely nothing else that belongs to the public performer.

There are other mistakes into which women may fall in reference to accomplishment. Some of them seem to imagine that it compensates for the want of all other attraction; and as it is their only charm, they are restless until it is displayed, and dissatisfied unless it excites admiration. Their happiness, or at least their affability, seems to depend on the success of their bravura, or the admiration excited by their tinting. Yet a mere display of skill contributes little to the agreeableness of society. However fond we may be of music or draw-

ing, we should scarcely select a companion from her proficiency in playing a concerto, or her skill in laying on colors.

Women who are eager to exhibit are often careless of pleasing in a domestic circle: their talent must be kept as a gem for special occasions; and, if these are wanting, it is almost as useless. It is to attract notice; and when the great end of notice is attained, it may be laid aside. It is to captivate; and when the prize is secured the fascination ceases.

But it is not to add another toil to the meshes of intrigue, nor to furnish coquetry with another means of allurement, that the talent of women is to be cultivated. Accomplishment is, indeed, a graceful and appropriate ornament; but it should be worn with ease, and should be rather the indication of an elegant mind than an extrinsic decoration. It should render a woman more agreeable both at home and in society, and should furnish her with one of those innocent and graceful refreshments which vary and relieve graver occupation.

It is seldom, indeed, that women are great proficients. The *chefs-d'œuvre* of the sculptress

need the polish of the master chisel; and the female pencil has never yet limned the immortal forms of beauty. The mind of woman is, perhaps, incapable of the originality and strength requisite for the sublime. Even Saint Cecilia exists only in an elegant legend, and the poetry of music, if often felt and expressed, has seldom been conceived by a female adept. But the practical talents of women are far from contemptible; and they may be both the encouragers and the imitators of genius. They should not grasp at too much, nor be content with superficial attainment; they should not merely daub a few flowers, or hammer out a few tunes, or trifle away their time in inept efforts, which at best claim only indulgence; but they should do well what they do attempt, and do it without affectation or display.

CHAPTER II.

CAUSES OF FEMALE INFLUENCE.

Nothing is so likely to conciliate the affections of the other sex as a feeling that woman looks to them for support and guidance. In proportion as men are themselves superior they are accessible to this appeal. On the contrary, they never feel interested in one, who seems disposed rather to offer, than to ask assistance. There is, indeed, something unfeminine in independence. It is contrary to nature, and therefore it offends. We do not like to see a woman affecting tremors, but still less do we like to see her acting the Amazon. A really sensible woman feels her dependence. She does what she can, but she is conscious of her inferiority, and therefore grateful for support. She knows she is the weaker vessel, and that it is as such that she should receive honor; and, in this view, her weakness is an attraction, not a blemish.

The appropriate expression of dependence is

gentleness. However endowed with superior talents a woman may be, without gentleness she cannot be agreeable. Gentleness ought to be the characteristic of the sex; and there is nothing that can compensate for the want of this feminine attraction.

Gentleness is, indeed, the talisman of woman. To interest the feelings is to her much easier than to convince the judgment; and the heart is far more accessible to her influence than the head. She never gains so much as by concession, and is never so likely to succeed as when she seems to yield.

Gentleness prepossesses at first sight: it insinuates itself into the vantage ground, and gains the best position by surprise. Whilst a display of skill and strength calls forth a counter array, gentleness at once disarms opposition, and wins the day before it is contested.

And if gentleness contributes so much to the fascination of woman, elegance is no less attractive. A woman should be elegant, not only in manner but in mind. Manner is, indeed, generally symptomatic; but, as it may be artificial, it is no sure criterion of mental grace.

It is the latter which is essential to true beauty. Without it, the fairest form disappoints and wearies. It is the radiance that sets off every other charm, and sheds on each its appropriate hue. It is tint and proportion. Yet it is more easily understood than defined, and better felt than expressed.

Taste is the true source of such elegance. As it teaches symmetry, so does it impart grace. Taste is the rule of elegance. There may be artificial forms; and these may or may not be agreeable to the proportions of taste: but taste gives the only true models, and every departure from them is an error.

Taste is susceptible of improvement, and elegance is the result of cultivated taste. As in art, the rude handler of the chisel may, in time, become a proficient in sculpture, or the most simple designer a master of the easel; so may the taste which refines the mind, and proportions the character, be equally disciplined and improved.

It is a great mistake to suppose that fashion is a criterion of elegance. The modes of fashion are entirely conventional, and are often as un

graceful as they are capricious. The lady, for instance, who anoints her head with tallow, and encircles her waist with the entrails of a cow, is irresistible in Ethiopia; and though we cannot sympathise with her admirers, we have no right to question their taste. Our own has been, at times, little better. We may smile at the strictures of the Spectator on the patches of his day; but the coiffure of this century has vied with the cushion of the last, and the dimensions of our own petticoats have sometimes seemed to threaten the reinstatement of the hoop.

But it is not in costume only that fashion is grotesque. In manner she is equally capricious. Elegance rests on immutable rules, but the versatility of *fashion* is proverbial. The euphuism of the Elizabethan court was but little more absurd than the mannerism which has often been as arbitrarily prescribed. Each may be in its turn a test of ton, or a passport to exclusive circles, or a mode as universal as the contour of a robe, and, from its sameness, as wearisome: but it has no intrinsic recommendation, and though it may obtain for a season, it must soon be cast off as an obsolete dress.

But breeding is quite a different thing. It is without affectation, and without constraint. It is unobtrusive and unpretending. It is always self-possessed and at ease; for it knows its own place and its own relations. Its courtesy is not officious, nor are its attentions ever troublesome. Yet this quiet and lady-like deportment, though it seems to imply no effort, is by no means an easy or a common attainment. On the contrary, we often see women who have lived much in society very deficient in this criterion of grace. And we can quite understand the remark of a really high-bred woman on a candidate for fashionable celebrity: 'Yes; she is very pretty, and very pleasing, but she wants repose.'

Elegance is nature, but not rude nature;—it is unaffected but not unpolished. It copies natural grace, and corrects natural defects. Yet it is no servile imitator, for it studies suitability as well as simplicity. It does not, for instance, imagine that what is very pretty and playful in a girl at fourteen is equally becoming at thirty. Neither does it play the romp, or act the groom, leap a five-barred gate, or affect the Di Vernon.

Least of all does it indulge in that railery, which is piquante, only because it is personal, and which amuses in proportion as it annoys. It has a respect for the feelings, and a tenderness ever for the faults, of others; and as it never wounds, so does it never invite aggression.

It implies too feeling; and here again does it differ from the polish of the world. Selfishness is the bane of fashionable life. Every one is cold, for every one is selfish. What court could be more polished than that of Marie Antoinette? Yet selfishness was the predominating principle; and in the hour of trial, self-preservation the only aim. The *elite* of Paris paid, however, the greater compliment to sentiment, by assuming its language, whilst they were strangers to its real influence.

Nothing is more persuasive than feeling: it has a natural charm to which art can never attain.

Elegance is poetry in action. Imagination may paint the heroine deficient in beauty, but never in elegance. It is this which diffuses, as it were, a halo round woman; which invests her with a romantic charm; and which more, per-

haps, than any other attraction, renders her an object of interest. Yet it is grace, not affected but natural, grace which tinges every thought, breathes in every expression, and regulates every movement, — which adorns the hearth, as much as the drawing-room, and which is habitual, because it is innate.

To be careless of elegance proves little anxiety to please, or little acquaintance with the susceptibilities of the heart. Man is very accessible to the graceful and the beautiful; and, however engrossed by higher pursuits, he seeks in the society of woman relaxation and refreshment. He wishes to find her the enlivener and sweetener of his leisure, as well as the sharer of his cares. And a sensible woman would be desirous that her address should furnish a recommendation, rather than a contrast, to her moral or mental worth.

Religion, far from disparaging elegance, gives new motives for its cultivation. The religious woman should endeavor to increase her influence that she may turn it to the best account: and, in this view, she will not consider what is ornamental as unworthy her regard. She will

cultivate it as a means of persuasion, and will study to be agreeable, were it only from a desire to recommend her principles.

Christianity is itself full of grace. It is a refiner as well as a purifier of the heart: — it imparts correctness of perception, delicacy of sentiment, and all those nicer shades of thought and feeling which constitute elegance of mind. Why, then, should piety and inelegance be associated? Or why should an absence of the graceful characterise religious persons so often, that awkwardness and even vulgarity are regarded by many as the usual concomitants of extraordinary seriousness?

Women of piety should not give occasion to such a reproach. They are not more devout, because they are ungraceful, nor more heavenly minded, because they are deficient in taste. On the contrary, they imbibe more deeply the spirit of their lovely religion, when they carry its charm into the detail of life, when they are fascinating as well as faithful, and agreeable as well as good.

CHAPTER III.

THE VALUE OF LETTERS TO WOMAN.

Opinion is now more than it ever was in favor of the diffusion of knowledge; and it is only to be expected that woman should profit by this enlargement of feeling. Not that the *bas bleu* is not now as unpopular as ever; but as female acquirement has become more common, it attracts less notice, and its utility and importance are better understood.

Still, however, there is no possession, of which men are so tenacious, as that of learning. Perhaps it is because knowledge is power, that they are therefore not disposed to share it with woman; or perhaps it is because, instead of improving it to good purpose, she sometimes only uses it as a plea for assumption.

It is to be feared that their reluctance is to be ascribed principally to the latter cause; for it must be allowed that literary ladies have not been always very prepossessing. The disciple

of Wollstoncraft threw off her hat, and called for a boot-jack; and imagined that by affecting the manners of the other sex, she should best assert her equality with them. The female pedant appears in a disordered dress, and with inky fingers; and fancies that the further she is removed from feminine grace, the nearer she approaches to manly vigor. And we cannot wonder that, with such examples, men should prefer proficients in housewifery to smatterers in science; and that they would rather see on their wife's table Mrs Dalgairns on Domestic, than Mrs Marcet on Political, Economy.

But then there is no reason why female acquirement should be identified with all this folly. On the contrary, it is the tendency of real knowledge to make her sensible, as well as humble; and it is on this very account so valuable to women.

To produce, however, this good effect acquirement must not be superficial. It is not the occasionally reading a review, or skimming a periodical, that will improve the mind, or afford us solid satisfaction. A very little knowledge gathered in this way enables a woman,

indeed, to shine in conversation, and gives her the credit of being very intellectual; but she is at the same time conscious of the weakness of her pretension, and is not unlikely to endeavor to compensate by mere fluency for what she feels her deficiency in depth.

Women are by no means wanting in ready talent: their perception is very quick; and they are dexterous in applying the knowledge they possess. Thus they sometimes seem to make a rapid progress, and even to outstrip minds of greater vigor. But, on this account, intellectual discipline is, in their case, the more essential, that it may teach them how really to improve their talent, and that it may check an exuberance which is generally disappointing because it is precocious.

It is to superficial attainment that we may trace most of the mistakes which persons fall into with respect to literature. We are never so likely to be conceited as when we estimate our proficiency solely by the number of our acquirements. And this is not unfrequently the case with women. They know a little Latin, and a little Italian, a little German, perhaps

a little Hebrew, or a little Greek, and they immediately imagine themselves scholars. And they are not unfrequently encouraged in their belief by the flattery of their friends: for to construe a page in a classic author, to read a German play, or to quote a stanza of an Italian poet, is quite sufficient to establish their claim to superior talent. Can we wonder, then, that they should be a little prone to vanity, when so much is thought of very trifling attainments; or that they should be somewhat ambitious of literary fame, when it may be so easily obtained?

It was different with the ladies of an earlier century,—with the Moricæ, and Bilibaldicæ, and Blauresicæ, of whom Erasmus makes honorable mention. The daughters of More, and the sisters of Pirckheimerus, the associate of Edward, and the pupil of Roger Ascham, enjoyed, indeed, no common advantages. But what would the female *bel esprit* of the nineteenth century think of maintaining a Latin correspondence with the first scholar of the age? Or what would our modern blue-stockings make of a dialogue of Plato, or a play of Sophocles? Or, to refer to a later period, how would our lady

philosophers solve a problem in the 'Ladies' Diary?'

Literature, indeed, was a rare accomplishment amongst women of former days; but when they did attempt it, they were satisfied with no ordinary proficiency. It is a pity that their industry and good sense are not oftener imitated; for, though we may not wish all women to be, like them, Grecians or mathematicians, we cannot question the superiority of intellectual pursuits to many of the usual ways of getting rid of time. Why should not the leisure of women be employed in storing and strengthening their minds? Why, if they are spared the fatigues of active life, should they be debarred from the pleasures of literature? The lives of too many of them are spent almost in idleness, and the alleged inappropriateness of intellectual pursuits furnishes a plea for listlessness and trifling. They fancy themselves not called to mental exertion, and they, therefore, throw away their time in frivolous occupation, or still more frivolous amusement. Passant la moitie de leur temps a ne rien faire, et l'autre moitie a faire des riens. But though all may not have

taste or capacity for the higher branches of learning,—all may not be able to paraphrase Job, or to translate Epictetus,—yet there are few who may not improve their talents, and would not be much more agreeable, as well as useful, if their minds were cultivated and enlarged.

There are some branches of knowledge which are strictly feminine, and from which there can be no reason for discouraging the sex. We may doubt the appropriateness of the crucible and the blow-pipe, or may wish the fair naturalist a better employment than breaking stones; but what is so calculated to embellish and refine the mind, as the *belles lettres* of every age and country? Only we should be always on our guard against imperfect attainment, and against making the enlargement of our sphere an excuse for being rambling and desultory.

There is a mistake with regard to languages into which women sometimes fall. They imagine that they cannot know too many tongues; and they forget that it is chiefly as a key to literature that these are valuable. Thus, when

they have mastered one or two books, they are only anxious to pass on to another continental dialect. And yet, if the labor lavished on verbal criticism has sometimes been regarded as mis-spent, how much more so is that which tends to convert the mind into nothing but a dictionary? It is not with a view of accumulating words, but of acquiring ideas, that it is useful to be a linguist.

But we are all apt to estimate acquirements by their rarity, and to neglect what is easy and essential, for the sake of what is more difficult and uncommon. A young woman, for instance, will attempt Dante, who cannot construe Metastasio; and, what is infinitely worse, will puzzle herself with German inflections, before she is familiar with Lindley Murray. We have heard of a lady, who, when at a loss how to spell a word, put a dash under the questionable letters, that, if wrong, they might pass for a joke. Modern education ought to prevent the necessity of such expedients; but even where women are adepts in orthography, they are not always so in punctuation: though they may affect to

be linguists, it by no means follows that they are good English scholars.

It is most important, not only that the mind should be well informed, but that there should be a taste for literature; and that knowledge should be appreciated for its own sake, and not merely as a distinction. The superiority of cultivated women is, in every thing, very apparent. They have been accustomed to think, and to discriminate, and their opinion is not a mere momentary impulse. Their sphere, too, is enlarged,—they are not so much actuated by selfish feelings, or so liable to receive partial, and consequently erroneous, impressions. They view every subject more calmly, and decide more dispassionately, and are generally more correct in their own sentiments, and more liberal to those of others.

It is mediocrity that is intolerant and opinionative. A woman who, without reflection, takes up the views of others, is peculiarly accessible to party spirit; and this is one reason why women, in general, are more zealous partisans than the other sex: their minds are more contracted, their knowledge more confined, and

their prejudices stronger. We can quite understand the strictures of Addison on the female sectarists of his day; for, though we have no patches now to mark our distinctions, the spirit of party is equally exclusive.

As a corrective to this, as well as a preservative from error, letters are very useful, and in this view, perhaps, almost as much so to women as to men; especially now, in these days of progress, when every class should be prepared for its advance, and when even the female mind should be strengthened for the increase of light. What an easy dupe to empiricism or design is a half-educated woman! With sufficient acquirement to be vain, and sufficient sensibility to be soon imposed on, she may be easily seduced from principles which she has received only on the authority of others, and which she is therefore ill prepared to defend. It was want of knowledge, of which the priest of Rome availed himself, when he assailed the female devotee with all the appliances of his superstition, and prevailed on her to forsake real duties for the quietism and asceticism of the convent. And it is want of

knowledge, of which the modern heretic equally makes use, when he too 'leads captive silly women,' and finds none so accessible to his influence as the weak, the sensitive, and the unenlightened.

Piety may be misguided, though it cannot be excessive; and the female mind, constitutionally less stable than that of man, needs especially the ballast of sound knowledge and good sense. —It is apt to pursue opinions to extremes, and to allow too much to its favorite bias; and on this account an accurate acquaintance with truth is the more essential.

No character commands more respect than that of the religious and cultivated woman; and it is to the credit of the sex that letters and religion have usually been associated. We dwell with pleasure on the piety of Lady Jane Grey, if that of Elizabeth be questionable. And we may surely hope that she *, who, when copies of the Scriptures were still scarce, presented the Hebrew Pentateuch to a scholar, too poor to buy one, could herself appreciate

* Charity, a sister of Pirckheimerus, to whom he dedicated some of his most learned works.

the sacred gift. Neither can we forget more recent examples. The names of Russell and of Hutchinson, of Rowe, Chapone, and Smith, of the amiable authoress of Father Clement, and of our own revered Hannah More, are together treasured in our minds as happy reminiscences of the union of female piety and accomplishment.

We cannot, indeed, for a moment question the advantage of letters to a religious woman. They afford her occupation, refresh her mind, and increase her power of usefulness. Religion itself is an intellectual as well as spiritual exercise; and its doctrines, though level to ordinary capacities, involve the highest speculations. They inform and discipline, as well as spiritualize the mind,—and it is delightful to observe the intelligence of many who have no other teacher.

Neither can we suppose that men are altogether averse to female literature. They would not, especially when they are themselves superior, wish to encounter, even in a female companion, the contractedness of ignorance, or the in-

eptitude of folly. They can have little pleasure in associating with those whose only conversation is *medisance* or gossip.

Rather would they desire to meet in a domestic circle a companion who could sympathise, if not participate, in their higher pursuits, who could appreciate literary excellence, and taste intellectual pleasure, and to whom knowledge had given elevation and refinement.

Nor would her accomplishments, in any degree, indispose her for active domestic duties. Order is the symptom of a well regulated mind, and the woman, who has felt the importance of interior arrangement, will scarcely be indifferent to her *menage*. And if experience has ever seemed to militate against this conclusion, the exceptions may be attributable to nature rather than education, and have probably proceeded from a constitutional defect, which intellectual discipline may have, in some degree, amended, but which it has not been able altogether to correct. Disorder is the accident, not the consequence, of talent; and, as it is the more conspicuous, so is it the less excused when accompanied with mental superiority. The

irregularities which proceed from indolence or frivolity receive far more indulgence.

Censorship is, indeed, alway severe on female talent, and not unfrequently is a woman prejudged a slattern, because reputed a genius. Slovenly attire, an ill-conducted household, and an ill-arranged table, are in the minds of many identified with female acquirement. Yet lighter accomplishments may be the more likely cause of such disorder; and she who has spent her life at her harp, or at her frame, will be less disposed to active duties than one to whom exertion is habitual. If the woman of mind bears with equanimity petty vexations,—if she lends a reluctant ear to family tales,—if she is not always expatiating on her economy, nor entertaining by a discussion of domestic annoyances, she is not the less capable of controlling her household, or of maintaining order in its several departments. Rather will she occupy her station with more dignity, and fulfil its duties with greater ease.

At the same time she should ever bear in mind, that knowledge is not to elevate her above her station, or to excuse her from the dis-

charge of its most trifling duties. It is to correct vanity, and repress pretension. It is to teach her to know her place and her functions, to make her content with the one, and willing to fulfil the other. It is to render her more useful, more humble, and more happy.

And surely such a woman will be, of all others, the best satisfied with her lot. She will not seek distinction, and, therefore, will not meet with disappointment. She will not be dependent on the world, and thus she will avoid its vexations. She will be liable neither to restlessness nor *ennui*;—but she will be happy in her own home, and by her own hearth, in the fulfilment of religious and domestic duty, and in the profitable employment of her time.

CHAPTER IV.

IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION TO WOMAN.

Religion has been sometimes decried as the passion of weak men, women, and children. Woman may blush for the association which the ridicule involves, but she has no reason to be ashamed of her propensity. May it ever be her distinction! It is the pearl which adorns as well as enriches.

To say that she is more religious than the other sex seems, indeed, to imply a reflection on the latter; yet, if the fact be true, it is no more than might be expected. The position and habits of woman are comparatively favorable to piety. She needs solace and occupation, and religion affords her both. Without it her character is sadly defective; even in the eyes of ordinary persons. A woman may as well be without heart as without religion; and few men, however irreligious themselves, but would

shrink from impiety in her. It involves a coldness and hardness of character offensive both to taste and feeling. Even when infidelity was more in vogue than it is as present, when it had almost monopolised talent, and identified itself with enlightened sentiment, the few women, who volunteered under its banner, were treated with the contempt they deserved. The female Quixote broke her lance in vindicating the 'Rights of Women;' and no one sympathised in her defeat.

The mere suspicion of irreligion lowers a woman in general esteem. It implies almost a reflection on her character, for morality cannot be secure without religion. A woman must hold no converse with the enemies of either. She knows that the romance, which invests impiety with the charm of sentiment, must not lie upon her table; nor must she be supposed to be acquainted with the poem, which decks out vice with the witchery of song.

Religion is indeed a woman's panoply, and no one who wishes her happiness would divest her of it; no one who appreciates her virtues would weaken their best security.

There is nothing so adapted as religion to her wants. Woman has many trials, and she therefore peculiarly needs support; and religion is her asylum, not only in heavy afflictions, but in petty disquietudes. These, as they are more frequent, are perhaps almost as harrassing; at least they equally need a sedative influence, and religion is the anodyne.

Resignation is not, as we are too apt to portray her, beauty bowered in willows, and bending over a sepulchral urn; neither is she a tragic queen, pathetic only in her weeds. She is an active, as well as passive virtue; an habitual, not an occasional sentiment. She should be as familiar to woman as her daily cross; for acquiesence in the detail of Providence is as much a duty as a submission to its result; and equanimity amid domestic irritations equally implies religious principle, as fortitude under severer trials. It was the remark of one, who certainly was not disposed to care for trifles, that 'it required as much grace to bear the breaking of a china cup as any of the graver distresses of life.'

Minor cares are indeed the province of woman; minor annoyances her burden. Dul-

ness, bad temper, mal-adroitness, are to her the cause of a thousand petty rubs, which too often spoil the euphony of a silver voice, and discompose the symmetry of fairy features. But the confidence which reposes on divine affection, and the charity which covers human frailty, are the only specifics for impatience. These, more than the choicest cosmetics, secure permanence to beauty, and render it more truly irresistible than any extrinsic decoration.

And, if religion is such a blessing in the ordinary trials of life, what a soothing balm is it in graver sorrows. From these, woman is by no means exempt; on the contrary, as her susceptibility is great, afflictions press on her with peculiar heaviness. There is sometimes a stillness in her grief which argues only its intensity, and it is this rankling wound which piety alone can heal. Nothing, perhaps, is more affecting than woman's chastened sorrow. Her ties may be severed, her fond hopes withered, her young affections blighted, yet peace may be in her breast, and heaven in her eye. And if the business and turmoil of life brush away the tears of manly sorrow, and scarcely leave time for the

indulgence even of sympathy, woman gathers strength in her solitary chamber to encounter and to subdue her grief. There she learns to look her sorrow in the face; there she becomes familiar with its features; there she communes with it, as with a celestial messenger, till at length she can almost welcome its presence, and hail it as the harbinger of a brighter world.

Religion, too, is the source of all her virtues. It inspires the minor as well as the more important graces. It teaches, for instance, affability; and though some seem scarcely to think it worth their while to cultivate politeness, yet courtesy is always appreciated, and is sure to make a woman liked. Not, indeed, the mere tinsel of profession, the unmeaning commonplaces of modish hypocrisy; but the overflowing of a benevolent heart, the expression of Christian sentiment, than which nothing is in reality more prepossessing. Politeness, indeed, argues a wish to please, and an interest in the welfare of others; and few are not grateful for this easy and kind attentio n.

Piety is so congenial to woman, that even in circles the least disposed to it, some profession

of it, in her, is a matter of course. Men are often religious by proxy: they reverse their ordinary privilege, and commit to female representatives their business in the house of God. Or, if they appear on ordinary occasions, it is too often matter for regret, that, in what seems to them a more serious service, they imagine themselves free to leave the church, whilst women are expected to kneel at the table.

Yet, even all this proves the universal impression in favor of female piety; and it is as congenial to her pursuits as to her character. It gives interest to her duties, and solace to her retirement. To the first, indeed, it is essential, for the self-denial which they involve must have its source in religion. Like all virtues, though they entail happiness, they require sacrifices. They imply effort, and precisely that effort which proceeds only from principle. Their fulfilment brings no *eclat;* it sometimes even interferes with it. A domestic woman will perhaps be little admired, or, at any rate, little talked of. She will be less brilliant, less fashionable, less distinguished, than one less exemplary at home. She will be neither the leader of the ton at

Almack's, nor a rival queen at the court of fashion. She will be neither a Helen nor a Dido.

But she will be contented. And she will owe her contentment to religion; for it is this alone which will compose and satisfy her mind. Mediocrity may, indeed, willingly take refuge in quiet life, and forget that which brought only disappointment; but there needs some potent influence to withdraw beauty from the scene of her homage, or talent from that of her display. There needs some sentiment more intense than the first blush of passion, more satisfying than the triumph of a successful flirtation, more permanent than the consciousness of a new station and dignity, to make the young aspirant content with home. She will, perhaps, feed for a while on the romance of love; and be pleased for a while with its syren fascination; and indulge for a while in the listlessness of sentimental enjoyments; but when she ceases to be idolised; when her nuptial ward-robe becomes obsolete; when *ennui* succeeds to excitement, then does she naturally seek some new impulse to relieve the monotony of domestic life. For though she may

have talked of love in a cottage, the rustic shed was lit up with the radiance of the drawing room; or may have rhapsodised about sentiment in solitude, the wilderness was peopled with the fairy forms of the brilliant assembly.

It is religion alone which can furnish such a one with solace and incentive. Nothing else can satisfy her heart. Not, indeed, a mere formal service, a dull routine of superstitious observance, resorted to at seasons, as the confessional or the penance; but a sentiment full of chastened fervor and pure affection; a sentiment which itself compensates for the sacrifices it requires, and substitutes a real and pemanent interest for the irregular excitement of the world.

Christian ethics are the only true morality; for they are the only morality which is both universal and minute. They are not a code, but a charter; not an institute, but a principle. They give to woman precisely that dignity which is consistent with her dependence: a dignity not of station, but of feeling, which makes her morally great, but practically subordinate.

All that the world can offer her is, in fact, of little value. Neither the blaze of rank, the

triumph of coquetry, nor the *eclat* of beauty or fashion, can really elevate her. They may all impart a mock lustre, but confer no true dignity.

Religion is her only elevating principle. It identifies itself with the movement of her heart, and with the action of her life, spiritualising the one, and ennobling the other. Duties, however subordinate, are to the religious woman never degrading; their principle is their apology. She does not live amidst the clouds, or abandon herself to mystic excitement: she is raised above the sordidness, but not above the concerns of earth; above its disquietudes, but not above its cares.

Religion is just what woman needs. Without it she is ever restless or unhappy; ever wishing to be relieved from duty or from time. She is either ambitious of display, or greedy of pleasure, or sinks into a listless apathy, useless to others, and unworthy of herself. But when the light from heaven shines upon her path, it invests every object with a reflected radiance. Duties, occupations, nay even trials, are seen through a bright medium; and the sunshine,

which gilds her course on earth, is but the dawning of a far clearer day.

And if pain, rather than toil, be her penalty; if an exemption from bodily labor be more than counterbalanced by bodily weakness, it is piety alone which can lighten such a cross. This only can inspire that passive fortitude which, to her, is more essential than active strength. And surely, religion never seems more lovely, or is more truly sublime, than when she stifles the cry of pain, and wipes the drops of anguish from the sufferer's brow; when she imparts a martyr's courage to the gentlest spirit,—when she teaches woman in the stillness of a sick chamber to bow her head in patient resignation, and to endure her trial with Christian fortitude and faith.

A woman's virtues must be genuine. They are to expand, not in the sunshine, but in the shade. And, therefore, they need some vital principle to supply the place of foreign excitement. Religion is this influence,—this germ of every grace, this sap which finds its way through every fibre, and emits the fairest blossoms without the aid of artificial heat.

The pious woman courts retirement. She seeks not the inertness of quietism, but the calmness and regularity of domestic duty. And though she may sometimes be called to less congenial scenes, she will neither refuse the summons, nor show a peevish reluctance to obey it; yet her taste is *home*! for there she feels she is most useful, most happy, and has most communion with her God.

And it is the domesticating tendency of religion that especially prepossesses men in its favor, and makes them, even if indifferent to it themselves, desire it, at least, in their nearest female connections. They can securely confide in one, who is under its sober influence, and whose duties and pleasures lie within the same sphere. They feel no jealousy of a sentiment, which, however intense, interferes with no legitimate affection, but which makes a woman more tender, more considerate, and more sympathising, than the most ardent passion of romance would do, or the most studied polish of the world.

But her piety must be sterling. It must be no latent form of a still restless ambition, that

has exchanged the glitter of fashion for the tinsel of profession, that still finds its pleasure in a crowd, and, weary of the turmoil of the world, seeks some new and more exciting stimulus. This may indeed pass current for piety; and as it borrows from religion its lustre, so does it often recompense it with the tarnish of its faults. But that sentiment is ever suspicious that leads woman from home, rather than to it, that prefers extraneous to domestic duty; that takes her to the *conversazione* rather than to her chamber, to the confidante rather than to God.

On the contrary, what more beautiful picture is there than that of the religious and retiring woman, who is struggling, perhaps, with domestic trial, and standing, perhaps, alone in sentiment and in duty. Her path is one of difficulty, but she neither makes her trials a theme of gossiping complaints, nor avails herself of the faults of others to excite pity for herself. And, if want of congeniality in those most near to her is her sore burden,—if even opposition is the appointed exercise of her faith,—she neither seeks notoriety by the cry of persecution, nor looks to the applause of others as a compensation for domestic trial.

It is thought very wrong, even by ordinary persons, to carry domestic secrets beyond our own walls, or to discuss the faults of our near relations with those who are comparatively indifferent. How much more tender should be the delicacy of a Christian. For, if nothing exasperates so much as the suspicion of a confidante, how unwise is that impatience that flies to a stranger for relief, and pours forth, on the unwilling ear, what ought to be strictly secret. It is a pity, in such a case, that decency does not impose reserve,—that the complainant does not feel so identified with the faults she deplores, as to shrink from their exposure,—that her interest and affection do not so far prevail over her confiding propensity, as to make her keep her grievance to herself.

How much more Christian is the course of uncomplaining meekness. True, this awakens little interest; it encourages no meddling interference; it asks for no human sympathy. Perhaps, even, it may be mistaken by some for compliance or compromise. But it seldom loses its reward.

For, if there is a recompense to piety on

earth, and a happy moment to the still-struggling Christian, it is when consistency receives its meed,—when the indulgence that has excused faults, the delicacy that has forborne complaint, and the kindness that has concealed infirmities, and at length appreciated,—when these reiterated acts, which have long been treasured up in grateful recollection, are ascribed to their own pure principle, and when this principle is recognised as the one only source of virtue and of peace.

It is then, even in this world, that the secret prayer is answered, and the secret tears are wiped away.

CHAPTER V.

FEMALE INFLUENCE ON RELIGION.

The promotion of religious feeling is one of the greatest blessings of female influence. Yet the more qualified women are to adorn and recommend piety, the more important is it that they should not mistake or misapply their power. They may be really useful,—they may, by their gentle persuasion, enforce truth,—they may cause religion to be loved for their sake;—how necessary, then, is it that they should study the means by which they may be the honored instruments of doing so much good! How unhappy that they should ever mistake their line, bring a prejudice on their profession, and mar their own acceptance!

Religion is peculiarly their province; and never is their influence so well employed as in recommending it. Never is woman so truly delightful as when she is the advocate for pie-

ty, and when, by a consistent and holy conversation, she exemplifies the principles which she wishes to enforce.

Her influence, indeed, is chiefly in example This is her best persuasive. By witnessing the effects of religion in her, men learn to appreciate its value. If it makes her more domestic, more self-denying, more kind, more contented, and more agreeable, they will, at least, respect it.

Experience proves the efficacy of this silent appeal. How often has it prevailed when a more direct one has been unsuccessful. And it is peculiarly appropriate to woman. None can find fault with her for consistency or virtue. None can blame her because she is more meek, more forgiving, more benevolent, more courteous, than others who are less religious. On the contrary, these graces secure to her an influence, and often pave the way for the reception of her opinions. If, in the early dawn of Christian light, woman was often honored as its harbinger,—if, even in the imperial palace, the apostle found in her no feeble advocate, and, at the semi-barbarous court, the missionary hailed her as his kind and fostering friend,—was it not by

her personal character that she mainly recommended truth, and advocated the doctrines she had herself learned to prize?

And so it is now. Women may often outlive prejudice. They may be so exemplary in their discharge of social duty, so pious towards their parents, so affectionate to their husbands, so devoted to their children; they may so grace and enliven the family circle, that their religion, which at first might have been considered their only defect, is at length valued, and, perhaps, even adopted. Many a pious son has recorded his debt of gratitude to a Christian mother,—many a Christian mother has sown like Monaca, the seed in sorrow, and, like Monaca too, has had reason to rejoice when it has returned sevenfold into her bosom.

And the influence of a religious woman may extend far beyond her own home. She may be the Priscilla, or the Lydia, or the Dorcas, of a village, sympathising with the necessities of the poor, denying herself to relieve them, and availing herself of the access thus obtained to their affections, to lead them to the one only source of consolation.

Such a one must be loved. She has a witness in the hearts of those around her, and they cannot but appreciate principles which produce such results.

Nor are there occasions wanting for more direct influence. An humble-minded Christian will not intrude her sentiments, or interfere officiously; but she will feel it her duty to do what she can; and a word spoken in season is seldom without effect. There have been instances when the gentle rebuke of female piety has availed to silence the scoffer, or put the infidel to blush;—when the kind and faithful admonition of female friendship has stopped the young in their career of folly, and when the cheering voice of woman has soothed the suffering and fortified the fainting Christian. And it is the duty of every woman to bring all her influence to bear upon the side of piety, and to be herself the personification of Christian grace, to identify her interests with those of religion, and to prove, by the consistence of her own conduct, that she is in earnest in all that she endeavors to enforce.

But whatever she attempts in this way should

be done in an appropriate spirit. Religion demands and inculcates humility. It involves subjects so important and so deep, that lowliness is the only fitting temper for the Christian; and we cannot but question the nature of that influence which leads to any opposite result. Least of all can pretension be excused, where the subject is so vast, and the capacity so limited;—where, if woman assume, she only discovers her weakness, and where she should esteem it her privilege to follow and to learn.

There is a great difference between being religious and affecting the theologian. Yet these are too often confounded; and women who, perhaps, are not remarkable for intellectual endowment, imagine, that because they are in earnest about spiritual concerns, they are qualified to enter the thorny path of controversy. This is, however, a great mistake. Not only is controversy, for the most part, unedifying, and very inappropriate to the gentler sex, but it often diverts them from profitable contemplation, and important duties. Besides, it is apt to make them opinionative and dogmatical, and to lead them to throw their influence rather

into the scale of party than into that of true religion.

Religion was, perhaps, never more talked of than it is at present. Not only is it the heart-enlivening topic amongst Christian friends, but serious conversation is often the passport to society, and the means of elevating individuals above their natural rank in life. There are thus many temptations to spurious piety, and there are many, too, to female vanity; for a slight proficiency in religious knowledge renders women fluent, and they may mistake mere facility of expression for real feeling.

And have we not reason to deplore the errors into which they are, in this way, occasionally betrayed? Do we not sometimes see even young women arrogating to themselves the right, not merely of private judgment but of dictation,—descanting on the conflicting questions which agitate the religious world, or enouncing with unhesitating confidence some new conceit, to which the caprice or ignorance of modern empiricism has given birth? And, at length, do we not see them become the tools of some interested fanatic, or the disciples of some scarcely

less culpable, though more honest, zealot, to whose keeping they have delivered their consciences, whose varying opinions they are pledged to adopt and to support, and whom they credulously and emulously follow through all the phases of his eccentric orbit?

Partly from the increased interest evinced by women on religious subjects, and partly from the change that has taken place in their pursuits and habits, they now hold a higher place in religious society than they ever yet did. Men, not unfrequently, defer to their judgment because they feel the importance of their suffrage. Women have, in fact, considerable influence upon public opinion in every thing. They draw out, compare, and publish the sentiments of others, and frequently add their own commentary besides.

Nor is the station which they enjoy in religious society undeserved. They *have* materially aided the cause of piety, and they may aid it still more; and many there are who, by their good sense, their Christian graces, and their genuine piety, merit all the deference which they receive. They are real blessings in

the circle in which they move, and they bear this certain criterion,—that, with whatever respect they may be treated, they are ever unconscious of their own claims.

Others there are who are not backward in profession, but whose influence is exerted in a very different way. Their religion is all impulse; they are anxious to be themselves of importance, and therefore they cannot be content with the quiet routine of ordinary female duties. They wander from house to house, retailing the spiritual errors of the day, feeling the religious pulse, dispensing prescriptions, and giving notoriety, at least, to every new nostrum which would impose on the credulity of weak and wayward Christians. And if they are but ill received by the vigorous and healthy, they are yet too acceptable to the valetudinarian; and going about with their little casket of specifics, they excite and foster the diseases they affect to cure.

The enthusiasm which thus spends itself is, at least, very questionable. It blazes, indeed, and dazzles for a while, but it is not the steady flame which is kindled in the sanctuary. Some-

times it is only an apology for piety, mere secular excitement, romance, or vanity, or caprice; and, sometimes, it is the defect which accompanies and deforms religion, the weed which springs up with and often overgrows it; which is mistaken for, and cherished as, the genuine plant; and whose precociousness is encouraged as a sign of spiritual maturity.

But very different is it in its produce. It bears not the Rose of Sharon, but the Apple of Discord: not clusters of the celestial vine, but spurious berries, which have the form, but not the sweetness, of the genuine fruit.

The visionary should not be identified with the sober minded believer,—the real lover of evangelical truth with the disciple of fanaticism, —and the faults of the one should not be imputed to the other. It is on account of the harm that the latter do to true piety that Christians are so much concerned for their mistakes.

For the irreligious must not suppose that because pious persons lament, and even censure the extravagance of zealots, they are therefore disposed to make common cause with the enemies of truth. On the contrary, it is their very

zeal for true religion that renders them jealous for its sake,—that leads them to regret the counterfeit, and to disown the caricature.

How sad is it when women bring discredit on the gospel by mistaking its spirit—when they become tired of wholesome instruction, and need some stimulating condiment to excite their morbid taste. They are then ready to welcome every new and erroneous doctrine. They will hunt it out from obscurity,—they will pursue it to the remote conventicle,—and, for its sake, they will leave the guide of their former selection, to follow some unknown teacher, some untaught and bold adventurer, to whom they ascribe gifts little short of inspiration, and an almost exclusive knowledge of Divine truth.

These persons are, indeed, very far from right. They may have mistaken the way from the very first;—they may have confounded error with truth, and fanaticism with piety. Or, if they once were in a healthy state, they have contracted disease. Theirs is a slow fever which preys upon the vitals of true religion, and the best that we can hope for them is, that they may recover from their malady. For their

meagre system is not the gospel,—their rapturous effusions are not the breathings of the Divine Spirit,—their circumscribed clan is not the one true and catholic church. They have wandered altogether from the right fold, and it is the voice of truth alone that can bring them back.

Pity it is that the symmetrical form of true religion should ever be obscured by the misshapen image of fanaticism, and that the prominence assumed by the latter should conceal her perfect features. But it is no wonder that it should be so; for fanaticism is ever bold, and courts display. She walks unveiled,—she tells her tale in the street,—she runs to rich and poor, to learned and unlearned,—proselytising some, alarming others; and raising, at least, the cry of party, either for or against herself.

How different is the quiet step and modest mien of true religion! She does not strive nor cry; but, like her Divine Author, when he walked on earth, she shuns the crowd of idle gazers, and stops the garrulous mouth of fame. Few speak of her,—few know her,—she is found in the retired village, or in the humble

shed,—in the private circle, or in the solitary chamber. She is the guide and friend of her, who, with a single eye, and simple heart, fixes her regard on heaven, and her affections upon God.

And religion will bless those who thus submit to her influence. She will bestow on them a peace which the world can never give. She will counsel them in every emergency, and guide them in that direct course which is better than all the crooked turns of worldly policy. She will so elevate them above the turmoils of life that, whilst duty involves them in its occupations, they will not be harassed nor enslaved by them; and she will impart to their character such dignity, that, though in some circles they may suffer reproach or ridicule for its sake, they will be, even there, secretly respected; they will be consulted in difficulty, and sought for in distress; and their presence will be welcomed, when the friendship of this world can afford no relief.

Such is the influence of the religious woman, and it will ever be exerted in a right cause. Religion will be loved and respected in her; and though she will be diffident of her own power

and retiring in her habits, she will not want opportunity or means of usefulness. In the prosecution of her quiet and unobtruding course, she may often find occasion to benefit others,—to counsel the weak, or to persuade the wavering,—to strengthen the unstable, or to bring the wanderer home.

CHAPTER VI.

FEMALE DEFECTS.

A low estimate of female pretensions is certainly not the fault of the present day. Women are, perhaps, sometimes in danger of being spoilt; but they cannot complain that they are little valued. On the contrary, their powers are often too highly rated. Their natural defects are overlooked; and the consideration in which they are held, the influence they possess, and the confidence placed in their judgment, are in some instances disproportionate with their true claims.

This, perhaps, is the cause of their occasionally aspiring to situations, and intruding upon offices, for which they are not fitted. They are betrayed into an overweening conceit of their own powers, and are not unwilling to put them to the proof. And the indulgence, with which their efforts are in general treated, prevents their

consciousness of failure, even when they are unsuccessful. A woman may obtain distinction for the attempts which would be little to the credit of any but a female candidate; and her sex is at once a recommendation and an apology.

It is, indeed, fair that she should be spared the severity of criticism; but she should not presume upon indulgence. Nature has assigned her a subordinate place, as well as subordinate powers; and it is far better that she should feel this, and should not arrogate the superiority of the other sex, whilst she claims the privileges of her own.

The character of woman, though inferior, is not less interesting than that of man. On the contrary, her very defects render her an object of solicitude; and if they disqualify her for some situations, they help to point out those for which she is really fitted.

But she should endeavor, as much as possible, to overcome her faults; and for this purpose should consider both their causes and their consequences. It is by knowing where we are liable to err, and the evils which our errors will

entail upon us, that we shall be most likely to correct and avoid what is wrong.

The faults of women are almost always attributable to weakness. Vanity, for instance, is a weakness; and vanity is a fault to which women are peculiarly liable. It is a weakness of judgment and of mind. A woman is often vain because she cannot appreciate true excellence; vain of petty triumphs, because she cannot estimate greater; vain of fashionable distinction, because she cannot comprehend intellectual superiority; vain of a little talent, or a little accomplishment, because she cannot even taste greater proficiency. And this vanity is increased by, and identified with, her love of approbation. The wish of being admired seems born with her, and is developed as soon as she begins to act. The little peri, who, with infantile coquetry, flutters her fan, or threads the gallopade at the baby ball, only displays the embryo of that sentiment which, perhaps, in after life, becomes her ruling passion. For, unless it be counteracted by a better principle, vanity is sure to take possession of the heart. It is in woman what ambition is in man: it

may be a less dangerous, but it is a meaner foible; and it is a form of self-love equally jealous and equally insatiate.

The fashionable woman is generally vain. Though she may possess neither beauty nor wit, yet she is vain; vain of her place in the aristocracy of fashion; vain of being one of the circle of exclusives; vain of that modish celebrity which is so eagerly sought after by every candidate for the honors of ton. Vanity is very evident in all she does or says. She may not detail her conquests, or boast of the admiration she receives. She may not weary her less distinguished associates by talking of her titled acquaintance, or blush to speak to a country cousin. She is too proud, and too well bred, to be guilty of such mistakes. But still she is vain; vain even in her good humor; vain in her condescension; vain in her tirade of fashionable gossip; vain in her ignorance of every thing else. The frigid welcome she bestows on the uninitiated; the stare with which she checks an inconvenient acquaintance, are as indicative of vanity as the coquetry she displays at Almack's or the care with which she arranges her coif-

fure for a drawing room. She is as vain in the country as in town; as vain in her dubious recognition of a younger son, as in her flirtation with an heir apparent; as vain in condescending to head a country ball, as in giving rise to an *on dit* in the Court Journal.

Vanity seems with her almost an allowed foible. The man of the world understands it, and takes advantage of it; and it is the source of much of the vice and misery which deform high life.

And no wonder; for the more vanity is indulged the more uncontrollable it becomes. When it cannot be gratified it is restless and uneasy. No creature, for instance, is more unhappy than an ex belle. To what expedients does she not resort to prolong her reign, or, at least, to make it believed that she is not yet gone by. And when she does vanish like a falling star, and there is no trace left of her glittering path, vanity stills remains, but only to torment her. It drives her into the slough of envy or the quicksands of *ennui*. It degenerates into hypochondriasis, or vents itself in ill humor.

What a pity it is that such a one does not

apply to the only remedy, that she does not seek in religion a corrective and a refreshment. This alone it is that would raise her above her disappointment; that would give her new interests and new hopes, and cause her to exchange the fatiguing and heartless amusements which she once deemed essential, for real contentment and lasting peace.

But vanity is not confined to fashionable life. Even cultivated minds are not always exempt from it; and though the Blue Stocking Club exists no longer, women are not proof against the vanity of letters. They have, indeed, in general, but little cause to be vain on this head, but it is because they have so little cause, that therefore they are so. The reputation of being a clever woman is easily obtained. Less than a schoolboy's learning is sufficient to confer it; and Minerva's pretty votaress lisps a page of Virgil, and spells an ode of Pindar, and is thought a prodigy of learning.

It is not, indeed, those who know most who are the most accessible to vanity. On the contrary, the really well informed woman feels the folly of pretension, and shows her good sense

by her humility. But the wish of being remarkable in some way is a temptation to many to diverge from their sphere, and court distinction even at the price of ridicule or censure. The *bas bleu* pants for notoriety, and avails herself of her acquirements only to secure it. She does all she can to sustain her claims: she accumulates around her the materials of learning, and her very boudoir breathes an academic air. Its decorations are sufficient to proclaim her character: its shelves are filled with books of every tongue: its tables are strowed with the apparatus of science; the casket of jewels is displaced for the cabinet of stones; and the hammer and the alembic occupy the stand allotted for the work-box. One niche glooms with a quartered skull; another is enriched by a classic statue; the easel stands in the back ground, and the harp is admitted to complete the picturesque. Here she sits enshrined; her dress arranged with studied negligence; her head a Babel; her speech a jargon of hard terms, and words of Johnsonian length.

Now this is only another form of vanity. And a literary mania is by no means the refuge

of the old and ugly; it is often indulged from the mere wish of being eccentric, and of attracting more than ordinary notice. To be the talk of a country town, and still more to be the wit of a season, is to some the object of their highest ambition. And then, there are the pleasures of patronage. How delightful to be the female Mæcenas,—to bestow on one poor author the sanction of your name, and on another the comfort of a dinner; to open your house to the literati; to take by the hand the half-fledged poet, and the incipient artist; to draw to your *conversazione* the Spanish patriot and the refugee royalist; the unturbaned Sultan and the wandering Greek; to be honored by a passing visit from the Lord Chancellor, or a salutation from the Great Unknown, or an excuse from the Poet-laureate: in short, to be the rendezvous of every wonder worth seeing, or not worth seeing, in the literary world.

No doubt such distinction is very tempting, and especially so, when it may be gained at so little cost. For it is quite different with women and with the other sex. Many a weary step must a man take to gain the laurel; and often

is his meed withholden, even when fairly earned. But the female *bel esprit* flutters from one fancy to another; writes a sonnet, skims a periodical, deciphers an alphabet, divides a crystal, glitters in a *souvenir*; and the crown of Corinne is, by acclamation, placed upon her brow.

Yet she is often very troublesome when thus adorned. One friend must contribute to her album, another to her *hortus siccus*. One must submit to a craniological scrutiny, another must inhale a new gas. She enters society ready primed, and woe to him who pulls the trigger. He is whirled from the Hellespont to the Polar Sea, from the Giaour to the Iliad; he must have scaled Vesuvius, and dived into Pompeii; he must calculate the date of an antediluvian bone, and trace the zoology of a fossil tooth; he must unravel Dante, and know Petrarch by heart.

But, notwithstanding all this, the *bel esprit* is courted. For there is an *eclat* about her which is reflected on those whom she persecutes with her attentions. She is courted by the candidate for fame, indulged by the man of letters, and hated by her own sex. This hatred, indeed,

she considers a tribute to her superiority; and her foible is the less likely to be corrected, because, when it is not encouraged by others, it is abundantly supplied from her own self-conceit.

The prevalence of this defect in woman is much to be regretted. It spoils many otherwise amiable characters, and exposes them to the censure and even contempt of those by whom they ought to be respected. But, however we may lament its influence in matters merely connected with this world, it is still more injurious when it mixes with and pollutes religious sentiment. Nothing can be more inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel, and Christians ought, therefore, at once to reject its poison. Yet it is with difficulty expelled, and especially from the female breast. It often lurks in ambuscade; and when we think we have wholly overcome it, it has, in fact, effected a compromise.

When religion is in fashion, the more frequent is the alloy as well as the counterfeit; for a profession of piety may be assumed from the mere desire for human approbation, and it may not be always easy to detect the impure motive.

Nor is it surprising that, accessible as woman is to vanity, it should sometimes mix in her holier duties; especially as, it must be confessed, the present tone of Christian society is calculated to encourage it. The young and beautiful woman, for instance, who may have led the van in the career of fashion, feels at length the vanity and disappointment of her former course, and flies to religion as a refuge. And so far all is well. She has found the pearl of great price—let her prove its value. But let her prove it, for a while, at least, in the seclusion of her own home, in the solitude of her own chamber, and in the quiet exercise of those domestic duties which she may have, for long, forgotten and neglected. She may thus be established in her better choice; may be grounded in truths of which she has hitherto known but little; may be strengthened against error, and be prepared to let her light shine before men. And she will probably, too, thus imbibe a taste for retirement, and a love of home, which is a far more Christian-like sentiment, and a better symptom of spiritual progress than a wish for publicity and a desire of excitement.

But no! Her partial, though scarcely judicious friends will not suffer her to be at peace. They allow her no probation: they cannot permit her to remain, even for a short time, unknown or unnoticed. The situation she held in the gay, she is immediately solicited to fill in the religious world; and she finds herself there, more than ever, caressed and courted. She is urged to be the patroness of charities,—to take the first seat in religious parties: she is appealed to as an oracle, when she is barely a novice, and compelled to be a controversialist before she is instructed in the elements of her faith. Her casting vote determines the popularity of a preacher; her carriage gives eclat to a religious assembly; her name recommends an institution; her opinion stamps a book. She is the wonder of the day; is pointed at, quoted, panegyrized: and if no open flattery meets her ear, if her personal attractions have ceased to be complimented, the homage she receives is only more intellectual and refined. Not that her former charms have altogether lost their effect; for it cannot be denied, that agreeable features and an elegant manner have their

weight in every society. Simplicity, too, may be more becoming than ornament; and beauty seldom loses any thing by Madonna tresses and a sombre robe.

Often, alas! may such a one become the mere idol of party; often may vanity only change its form, and send forth new shoots, when it is thought to be eradicated. For what but vanity leads some seemingly pious women to draw around them an exclusive coterie; to withhold the hand of fellowship from all who do not belong to their own sect; and to treat with strangeness, and even with neglect, the experienced and sober minded Christian? And what but vanity leads to the frequent intrusion of women at the present day into new and untried offices? Must we not suspect that where there is so much assumption there must be self-conceit; and that when publicity is so much courted, there must be some eagerness for display? And though we may not question the sincerity of zeal at once so energetic and so self-denying, yet must we not lament its misdirection, and condemn its officiousness? There might, surely, be equal

energy and less eccentricity, equal spirituality and more decorum.

Why should not, for instance, the female preacher confine her exhortations to the cottage; and when she does deliver them, close the doors? Why should she convert her school-room into a conventicle, and, by the novelty of her exhibition entice from more regular service? Is it that the authorised ministry is not enough? or that she imagines herself better qualified to teach? Is it that apostolic order is obsolete? or that female gifts are reserved for these privileged days? It may be, that her manner is feminine, and her voice melodious,—that her doctrine is sound, and her preaching effective. It may be even that she does good,—that she excites attention; and that those whom piety would not bring to the church, curiosity will lead to her meeting. But could she not do good more quietly? Could she not do good without the admixture of what is questionable? Could she not do good without infringing order, offending propriety, exciting discussion—without giving rise to censure on the one hand, or encouraging, perhaps, rash and unsuccessful attempts on the

other? Could she not do good, and be strictly feminine?

Who can doubt that vanity is the root of insubordination, and the hotbed of fanaticism? It is vanity that makes women set up to be teachers when they are mere sciolists. It is vanity that makes them despise instruction, and trust to intuition,—that even leads them at times to mistake the ravings of a heated brain for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And, if we may trace to other sources the aberrations of the present day,—if the imagination, whose excursiveness is pampered, becomes at length uncontrollable, —if the love of novelty is abroad, and every thing old is prejudged and precondemned,—still to vanity must we, in part at least, ascribe the melancholy defections of some who gave promise of better fruit. To it we must attribute the unhallowed schisms, the unscriptural heresies, the unauthorised pretensions, in which women take so prominent a part, and by which they give so much occasion of offence. They are puffed up by self-conceit—they mistake the impulses of enthusiasm for revelations from Heaven—and forget that, while humility is the accompaniment

of true piety, order is the unvarying characteristic of the operations of the Spirit of God.

The more the effects of vanity are to be lamented, the more incumbent is it on Christians to check its growth. Yet this is scarcely remembered, when the poor girl is taken from her spindle and her cottage to pray and to expound in public, or when those of higher grade are enticed from their domestic and quiet duties by the glare and excitement of religious exhibitions.

Neither is it remembered, when the woman of rank is received with a deference almost approaching to idolatry,—when her every look and word are treasured up and repeated,—when she is encouraged to pronounce upon characters and doctrine,—to detail in the evening assembly her morning achievements, or enlarge in the class-room on the experience of her closet,—when she may make her strictures on others a plea for speaking of her efforts on their behalf, and indulge in censoriousness and egotism under the cloak of spiritual earnestness.

Vanity is in such cases the canker of religion: it gnaws like a worm at the root; and when we

look for the harvest, the fruit is dust and bitterness.

How anxiously should we therefore watch its inroads!. How carefully should we draw the fence around our own hearts! How especially should they by whom it has been long indulged guard against its revival. For nothing is so dangerous as an old enemy under a new name, and religious vanity is both more offensive and more insidious than any other.

It is on this account that quietness is so desirable. It is not the going round a circle of religious acquaintance, nor the hurrying from one religious meeting to another,—the discussing with one the popular preacher, and with another the popular heresy,—the bandying of religion from mouth to month,—that can promote its internal growth, or evidence its genuineness. Nor even is an indefatigable attendance upon congregational services, nor an unwearied assiduity in public benevolence, a sure criterion of our spiritual taste.

Privacy tries the *sincerity* of our religion. In society is its *strength* proved. But it is when the flame of private devotion burns without

adventitious excitement, that we may trace its origin to Heaven. And it will reascend there, it will shine more and more unto the perfect day. It will mount to the throne of God, and unite itself to its parent fountain.

Vanity is very selfish : it leads us to seek self in every thing; and therefore, in proportion as it is indulged, kindness and amiability disappear. Nothing then, is a greater blemish in female character: for we love disinterestedness in woman,—we love to find in her, warmth of heart and tender sympathy. And when, on the contrary, she is anxious only to distinguish herself, to gain notoriety by some means—to be very brilliant, or very intellectual, or very religious, merely because such is the fashion of the day, —we cannot but turn from her with disappointment, and feel that, however precious the gem may be in regard to quality, there is a flaw in it which renders it worthless.

Vanity is the germ of party spirit. It is this which it would substitute for true piety; for while the latter recoils from it, vanity and party spirit go hand in hand. Flattery is the coin in which partisans pay their proselytes; and the

vain person is not proof against its corruption. It entices silly women, and sends them out to parade with party colors, and in the mean while betrays them to the enemy at home.

It is painful to note human inconsistency, And, perhaps, it is in nothing more evident than in the occasional association of vanity with superior endowment. We see it disfiguring genius and obscuring religion; but it is a weakness in relation to which example should furnish not an apology, but a warning. For it sometimes so tarnishes excellence, that we fail to recognise the intrinsic value of the latter, and, overlooking the beauty, are struck only by the blemish.

CHAPTER VII.

FEMALE DEFECTS.

The fickleness of woman is proverbial. Yet the reproach, in its usual acceptation, is, in a great measure, undeserved; for she is capable of long and steady attachment, and inconsistency is chargeable rather on the other sex.

But though the heart is not in fault, the head, perhaps, is; and to inconsistency of opinion, though not of affection, women are, it is to be feared, somewhat liable.

This proceeds, in great measure, from inconsiderateness. They are apt to imbide opinions rashly, and to abandon them precipitately; and they are ever ready to hear and to adopt whatever has the charm of novelty.

The love of what is new is, indeed, natural to the sex. In many of their pursuits or pleasures, novelty is the attraction. A new dress, or a

new song, is each, in its way, thought very delightful. On the contrary, nothing is so ennuyant as sameness. This is especially felt by the woman of the world. Monotony is, above every thing, the object of her dread. The same faces weary her—beauty wearies her—and she often flies from the country for no better reason than because she is tired of flowers and green fields, and the unvaried dulness of the family circle. Modern ingenuity must therefore be exhausted to captivate her fancy:—the town is a magazine of novelties; and the artist, as well as milliner, must supply the demand.

Unhappily, the same weakness is sometimes indulged in more serious matters. The appetite is still greedy, though the food is different; and the spiritual novelty is welcomed with the same avidity as once was the worldy bauble. Women, indeed, love portents in every thing. A wonder, whatever it be, excites their interest; and extravagance seems, with some, almost a recommendation.

Religious persons, however, should be especially on their guard against this foible; lest their religion be identified with caprice, and be

thought nothing more than a paroxysm of devotion, which will subside like any other fit.

It is sterling principle alone, which imparts stability, and which gives truth for a foundation and a guide; and she, who is possessed of it, may be depended on alike in all relations and circumstances. Her religion is no wayward fancy, no day-dream, no precocious and sickly plant, that springs up in a night and withers in an hour; its growth is sure and steady, though it may be slow; its roots are deep, and it will, in time, reach to Heaven.

There is an inconsistency observable in the female mind, for which allowance is not always made; and, on this account, the comparative estimate of the sexes is sometimes incorrect. Women have so much aptitude of talent; they can learn so many things, and are so dexterous in applying their knowledge; that their intellectual gifts are by some over-rated, and regarded as quite on a level with those of the other sex.

But strength and weakness are often sadly

blended in the same individual; and an unsound judgment is found, in many women, quite compatible with attainment. We are startled at the incongruity; we are surprised to see so much weakness combined with so much acquirement, and to meet a woman who can talk Greek, without being able to act common sense.

Want of judgment, is, indeed, one of the most common defects in female character, and it is in discernment, rather than in capacity, that the inferiority of woman consists. She chose wrong at first, and liability to error seems entailed upon her. We see this repeatedly exemplified. It is where judgment is required that she is most apt to fail: and it is this, in part, which renders her so susceptible of religious error. All of us are apt to identify theoretical knowledge with spiritual discernment; yet it is very possible to talk well upon religion, to quote Scripture, to have a text for every occasion, to read the religious miscellany, and the religious controversy of the day, and yet be very ill grounded in religious truth. It is very

possible to obtain credit for much piety, and yet to do wrong on the very points on which our judgment is least mistrusted. And it is in this way that some, apparently conscientious persons, not unfrequently mistake. They have in religion, as in other subjects, just that ready knowledge which is always producible, and which leads them to imagine themselves proficient in theology, and to obtain credit for being so, when, in fact, they are mere babes in spiritual experience.

It is a refreshment when we do meet with those, —and many such there doubtless are,—who are superior to all these faults. Such persons are not unconscious of their natural inferiority, nor of their individual defects, but they labor to improve the one and to correct the other. They have disciplined their minds in early youth, and they have gathered experience from the trials of life, and they afford a beautiful instance of steadiness and discretion.

There have been examples of female excellence in every thing. We have heard of the heroine, and of the female martyr, of the woman of letters, and of the poetess. We are instructed

by the recollection of Cornelia and Blandina,* of the maids of Saragossa and of Orleans; and the legend of Sappho derives credit from our living reminiscences of Baillie, Hemans, and De Stael. But though these are instances of female superiority, greatness is not the characteristic of the sex. On the contrary, it is to be feared that littleness of mind is rather their peculiarity,—and it is one which the habits of many women do not tend to correct. They are busied about little things, vexed by little cares, anxious about little occurrences. Some, indeed, unhappily, seem to live but for trifles. Theirs is a youth of dress—an old age of cards and gossip. The only effort they make in the way of duty is, to order dinner,—and in the way of occupation, to work a flower, or read a novel. And when a becoming head-dress, or an agreeable partner, have ceased to be matters of interest, they fly to tittle tattle, as to their only refuge from dulness.

Gossip of all kinds is, however, equally idle and

* A blessed martyr, who, after having seen her brother, a youth of fifteen, expire in torture, was herself exposed to wild beasts.—See Milner, vol i. chap. vi.

frivolous. Whether it be the scandal of a country town, or of the great world, it is equally idle and equally wrong; and it is a disgrace to the gentler sex, that they are so universally charged with the propensity. Not but that the stigma is both too generally and too exclusively applied; for there are many women who by no means deserve it, and there are many men who do. And if the majority still be on the side of female delinquents, we must make some allowance for their contracted sphere, and their want of important occupation. True, every woman may find plenty to do, and every woman may do good,—and employment is the best prescription for a restless tongue. But education and habit are generally in fault. There are many who are by no means disinclined from useful effort, but who do not know how to commence it; and who, if they are now little better than tattlers or busy bodies, might have been earlier led to devote their time to improving occupation and active duty.

Religious gossip is quite as bad as any other. It can be by no means edifying to be perpetually discussing the spiritual state of others, and

giving our opinion on their progress. We can scarcely indulge in any such comments without being in some degree censorious; and it would always do us much more good quietly to examine our own hearts, than to interfere with the conduct or consciences of those around us.

Yet this is a propensity in which, it must be allowed, we are all occasionally apt to indulge; and if some are intolerant to every aberration from their standard of duty, others are equally tenacious of what they imagine decorum. They are the first to note indiscretions of every kind, —to surmise what is wrong, and predict what is unhappy. They are the Cassandras of society; and if their conversation is ever liked, it is a justification of the remark, that there is something not disagreeable in hearing of the misfortunes of our best friends.

There are, however, comparatively, few women who deserve such a reproach. Even those who *are* too fond of discussing their neighbors, indulge their propensity, in general, with no ill intent. They do so, often, from the mere love of talking, and because, when they have

exhausted the weather and the fashions, they are somewhat at a loss for subjects.

But women should endeavor to raise their minds above the trifles which too often engross them. They should consider that intellectual elevation is the great end of attainment: for it is not the being a little more accomplished than their grandmothers that will impart to them real superiority. They may multiply acquirements, and yet be no wiser than if their only book had been the Spectator, and their only study the science of confections.

The great end of knowledge is to learn to think; and of this women are quite capable. They are capable of moral and intellectual efforts; and the more they improve their mental faculties, the more useful will they be, and the higher will they rise in the social scale.

And they will, too, be less liable to go wrong. For they will have that within them, which will be a corrective to their faults, and a stimulus to their virtues.

Such women, though they may have their share of trial, will bear up against misfortune, and will animate and bless others. And their

religion will be so sound and genuine, that it will be their refuge in every distress,---the spring of their comfort, and the ground of their hope;—it will be liable neither to decline nor change, but will prove a never failing source of comfort in all the vicissitudes of life.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON FEMALE ROMANCE.

Most women are enclined to be romantic. This tendency is not confined to the young or to the beautiful; to the intellectual, or to the refined. Every woman capable of strong feeling is susceptible of romance; and though its degree may depend on external circumstances, or education, or station, or excitement, it generally exists, and requires only a stimulus for its development.

Romance is, indeed, the charm of female character. Without it no woman can be interesting; and though its excess is a weakness, and one which receives but little indulgence, there is nothing truly generous or disinterested, which does not imply its existence. It is that poetry of sentiment which imparts to character or incident something of the beautiful or the sublime; which elevates us to a higher sphere; which gives an ardor to affection, and a life to thought,

and a glow to imagination; and which lends so warm and sunny a hue to the portraiture of life, that it ceases to appear the vulgar, and cold, and dull, and monotonous reality, which common sense alone would make it.

But it is this opposition between romance and sobriety that excites so strong a prejudice against the former. It is associated in the minds of many with folly alone. A romantic, silly girl is the object of their contempt; and they so recoil from this personification of sentiment, that their chief object seems to be to divest themselves altogether of its delusion. Life is to them a mere calculation; expediency is their maxim,—propriety, their rule,—profit, ease, or comfort, their aim; and they have at least this advantage,—that while minds of higher tone, and hearts of superior sensibility, are often harrassed and wounded, and even withered, in their passage through life, they proceed in their less adventurous career, neither chilled by the coldness, nor sickened by the meanness, nor disappointed by the selfishness of the world. They virtually admit, though they often theoretically deny, the baseness of human nature; and, strang-

ers to disinterestedness themselves, they do not expect to meet with it in others. They are content with a low degree of enjoyment, and are thus exempted from much poignant suffering; and it is only when the casualties of life interfere with their individual ease, that we can perceive that they are not altogether insensible.

A good deal of this phlegmatic disposition exists in many who are capable of higher feeling. Such persons are so afraid of sensibility, that they repress in themselves every thing that savors of it; and though we may occasionally detect it in the mounting flush, or in the glistening tear, or in the half-stifled sigh, it is in vain that we endeavor to elicit any more explicit avowal. They are ashamed even of what they do betray; and one would imagine, that the imputation of sensibility were almost a reflection on their character. They must not feel, or, at least, they must not allow that they feel: for feeling has led so many persons wrong, that decorum can be preserved, they think, only by indifference. And they end in becoming really as callous as they wish to appear; and stifle

emotion so successfully, that at length it ceases to give them uneasiness.

Such is often the case with many who pass through life with great decorum; and though women have naturally more sensibility than the other sex, they too, sometimes, consider its indulgence altogether wrong. Yet, if its excess be foolish, it is surely a mistake to attempt to suppress it altogether; for such attempt will either produce a dangerous revulsion, or, if successful, will spoil the character. One would rather, almost, that a woman were ever so romantic, than that she always thought, and felt, and spoke by rule; and should deem it preferable that her sensibility brought upon her occasional distress, than that she always calculated the degree of her feeling.

Life has its romance, and to this it owes much of its charm. It is not that every woman is a heroine, and every individual history a novel; but there are scenes and incidents in real life so peculiar, and often so poetic, that we need not be indebted to fiction for the development of romance. Christians will trace such scenes and

incidents immediately to Providence, and they do so with affectionate and confiding hearts; and the more affecting or remarkable these may be, the more clearly do they recognise the Divine interference. They regard them as reminiscences of Heaven, to recall to them their connection with it, and remind them, that whatever there may be to interest or excite their feeling here, there is infinitely more to affect and warm their hearts in the glorious and glowing prospects beyond.

It is natural that women should be very susceptible to such impressions; that they should view life with almost a poetic eye; and that they should be peculiarly sensitive to its vicissitudes. And though a Quixotic quest after adventures is as silly as it is vain; and to invest every trifle with importance, or to see something marvellous in every incident, is very preposterous; there is no reason why the imagination should not grasp whatever is picturesque, and the mind dwell upon whatever is impressive, and the heart warm with whatever is affecting in the changes and chances of our pilgrimage. There is, indeed, a great deal of what is low and mean in

whatever is connected with this world,—quite enough to sully the most glowing picture; but let us sometimes view life with its golden tints,—let us sometimes taste its ambrosial dews,—let us sometimes breathe its more ethereal atmosphere: and let us do so, not as satisfied with any thing it can afford,—not as entranced by any of its illusions; but as those who catch, even in this dull mirror, a shadowy delineation of a brighter world, and who pant for what is pure, celestial, and eternal. This is surely better than clipping the wings of imagination, or restraining the impulses of feeling, or reducing all our joys and sorrows to mere matters of calculation or of sense.

They are indeed to be pitied, who err in the opposite extreme--whose happiness or misery is entirely ideal; but we have within us such a capacity of both, independent of all outward circumstances, and such a power of extracting either from every circumstance, that it is surely wiser to discipline such a faculty,than to disallow its influence.

Youth is, of course, the season for romance. Its buoyant spirit must soar, till weighed down

by earthly care. It is in youth that the feelings are warm, and the fancy fresh; and that there has been no blight to chill the one or to wither the other. And it is in youth that hope lends its cheering ray, and love its genial influence; and that our friends smile upon us, and our companions do not cross us, and our parents are still at hand to cherish us in their bosoms, and sympathise in all our young and ardent feelings. It is then that the world seems so fair, and our fellow-men so kind, that we charge with spleen any who would prepare us for disappointment; and accuse those of misanthropy who would warn our too confiding hearts. And though in maturer life we may smile at the romance of youth, and lament, perhaps, its aberrations, yet must we often regret the depth of our young emotions, the disinterestedness of our young affections, and that enthusiasm of purpose which, alas! we soon grow too wise to cherish.

Young women are peculiarly liable to enthusiasm of every kind. They are so gentle, and so tender, and so imaginative; and they have often so much leisure to indulge in reveries and ecstasies, that it is not to be wondered at that they

should be occasionally somewhat visionary. Yet their extravagance has contributed more than any thing else to bring discredit upon sentiment. Its affectation often sickens more even than its folly. It is so distressing to see a young woman sighing, and weeping, and dreaming away her existence; one moment in an hysteric, and another in a faint; always getting up a scene, or supporting a part, that one is almost prepared to accede to any tirade against sentiment, the caricature of which is so truly absurd. Young women should be taught the folly of sentimentalism. They should be taught, that though it is a very right thing, and a very serious thing, to feel, it is a very wrong thing and a very silly thing to be languished and affected. They should learn to look at life through a faithful medium; to see its long perspective in all its true variety of light and shade, of what is beautiful and what is depressing. And if, even while they allow the preponderance to the latter, their eye will still seek out and linger on some few bright spots, and their young anticipations will scarcely submit to be sobered by any thing but by their own experience, they should, on this account especially,

learn to stretch their view beyond this earthly prospect, to rest their sight upon a far distant land, where there is, indeed, every thing to transport and every thing to satisfy; where there are scenes too vivid for imagination to paint, and pleasures too sublime for intellect to conceive.

The romance of youth is naturally associated with that of love, and it is the intimacy of their union, and the inconsequences which frequently result from the latter, that may in some degree account for the horror which certain persons entertain of sentiment. A romantic girl is concluded to be in love, or ready to become so. She is, in her own imagination, a lady of romance; and her sensibility is the cause of a thousand follies, if not of more serious aberrations. Love seems to her such a pleasing dream; it is identified with so many soft and sweet emotions, and associated with so many picturesque and pretty things; with the interesting flutter, and the speaking sigh; with music, and poetry, and moonlight, and a cottage, that her foolish heart welcomes its very name; and she courts the tender passion, till she is, or affects to be, its victim. And no wonder, then, that she cherishes

it, be it ever so incongruous. Opposition is its nourishment, for it is her ambition to be a heroine; and though she might disdain her inamorato were he admitted to her mother's drawing-room, she will think him irresistible as she smiles on him from a garret; and will nurse and pamper her capricious and wayward fancy, till it become a dangerous disease.

And even without such excess, there is often a great deal that is foolish and sentimental in young women, which the modish coquetry and silly vanity of the world tend too much to encourage. To be the object of admiration and remark; to talk over in the morning coterie the flirtations of the evening assembly; to be absorbed by a Platonic sentiment, may seem at the time very interesting. But these are often the beginning of sorrow. If love has rendered many women very unhappy, and some very criminal; if that, which may be the fountain of a woman's joy, becomes to her too often only a source of misery; if, instead of leading a contented and useful life, she pines away in chagrin, or languishes in inertness, or becomes at once an object of pity and of blame; this is often attri-

butable to the mere gratification of a paltry ambition, or to the indulgence of a morbid sentimentalism, which a little energy and a little common sense would soon have subdued. She has talked and mused herself into love, and has affected the symptoms, till they have really taken possession of her heart.

A little wholesome occupation is by far the best cure for this fantasy. It is the best remedy both for sickly fancies and for real grief; and persons even of superior intelligence and high religious feeling need and experience its efficacy in the latter. And for the hypochondriasis of love it is an infallible specific, and those who have not recourse to it are wilful suicides. Yet it is a better preventive even than it is a cure; and to keep the mind well exercised, and the body actively engaged, is an effectual antidote to the extravagances of sentiment, or the inconsequences of romantic passion.

Still, however silly sentimentalism may be, an attempt to reduce to cold calculation the warm affections of youth is very unwise, as well as, for the most part, very futile. The follies of romantic persons are often attributable to such

treatment. It is precisely the girl who has been daily schooled in lessons of mere worldly prudence,—who has been told that love exists only in the reveries of poets,—and that it is highly indecorous and wrong ever to entertain such a sentiment, who will listen to the first fond tale, and will give away her heart to the first bold bidder, and who will fancy that there can be nothing so interesting and delightful as a descent on a rope ladder, or a flight to the Tweed. Or if she is so credulous and so docile as to believe and follow her instructers, how certain are they to render her unhappy! They will lead her to take the most important step in life with the same indifference, and for the same reasons, as she would accept a partner or conclude a bargain; and she will then have to experience all the bitterness, and be exposed to all the dangers, of a life without sympathy, and of an union without affection.

And why deprive life of its softest charm, and woman of her loveliest attraction? Is there any sentiment so sweet as that which unites those who virtuously and truly love;—which identifies their hopes, their joys, their prospects;

—which inspires the weaker with affiance, the stronger with sympathy,—which becomes more pure, more disinterested, more intense, the longer it is experienced;—and which, looking beyond the narrow span of this earthly existence, longs for its renewal in a brighter world? And is there any thing which can compensate for the want of such a sentiment in woman? She may amuse, or dazzle, or look pretty; she may show off well in a drawing-room and gratify for a while the vanity that selected her; but her brilliancy cannot compensate for her indifference; nor can *she* inspire an exalted sentiment who is herself incapable of feeling it. What but love can dictate the amenities so essential to domestic happiness,—can excuse mutual faults,—can drive away dulness, and give interest to duty,—can lighten every burden, and enhance every pleasure—can sweeten every thing bitter, and render more grateful every thing sweet? Love is indeed the golden thread which imparts richness and value to the coarsest woof—and happier, far happier are they, who, with love in their hearts, encounter many a shock, and cope with many a struggle, than they who, soured my mu-

tual disesteem, find even their luxurious indolence fatiguing and their costly pleasures disappointing and tasteless.

It were well that young women should feel that affection is a thing too precious to be thrown away, and too serious to be trifled with. They may, and probably they will, love;—and, if the object be worthy of their regard, the more deep and sincere the sentiment, the more likely is it to make them happy.

Such is indeed *their* due who are themselves in earnest—and minds and hearts of the finest tone will be the most jealous of any thing like coldness. Nor is it depth of sentiment which is to be apprehended;—it is that fickle, shallow, perverse, and silly day-dream, which women miscall love, whose results are so pernicious, and whose effects on character are so undermining. There is nothing disinterested or elevating about it: it is often mere vanity,—the *eclat* of an admirer,—the excitement of a courtship,—the matrimonial equipment,—the bridal attendance, the privilege of precedence, or, as was once said by a young and gay *fiancée*, of having gloves and ribands to match.

There is a great deal of spurious sentiment in every thing. And the affectation or misapplication of feeling is far more prejudicial than its excess. Thus the sympathy which works of fiction excite, though it has in it something tender and romantic, by no means involves real feeling. The young woman who is versed in romances will, no doubt, acquire the language of sentiment. She will have a sigh and a tear for every occasion,—a languishing look, and a nervous palpitation; she will condole with every tale of distress, and be exuberant, at least in her professions of sympathy. She will even imagine it very pretty and picturesque to appear in a cottage,—to drop a guinea on a poor man's table,—and to receive, with blushing modesty, his lavish thanks. But when the effort is really to be made,—when she finds that charity involves self-denial and exertion,—that she must rise from her luxurious couch, and soil her silken sandals, and encounter perhaps rudeness and ingratitude from the objects of her relief,—and that all this is to be done without observation or applause,—that there is no one to overhear her silver voice, or to watch her gliding footsteps,

or to trace her fairy form as she passes down the village street,—then her philanthropic ardor cools,—she shrinks from the painful duty, and discovers that what is very interesting and poetic in description is very dull and irksome in practice. The very morbidness of her sensibility is a bar to the real exercise of benevolence;—she cannot bear to look upon pain: there is so much that is offensive in human misery, and unromantic in its detail,—there is so much that is appalling in scenes of misery, and sickness, and death, that she recoils from the mere observation of such calamities, and shuts her eyes and closes her ears to genuine distress, from the same feelings that cause her to scream at the approach of a spider, or faint at the sight of blood.

Yet she delights to nurse imaginary griefs, to live in an ideal world,—and so to pamper her fancy, and excite her sensibility, that they alone become to her prolific sources of unhappiness.

There is a romance in grief which is highly poetic. There is something sublime in the extremity of human woe. Who does not feel its pathos when he reads of Antigone or of Hec-

uba;—of the daughter of Aiah, or of the widow of Nain? Who does not feel it when he witnesses or experiences the too frequent tragedies of ordinary life?

Yet there is here also danger in the indulgence of sentiment. There may be a pride in the excess of grief. There may be a luxury in the exuberance of tears. There may be a dreaming trance, in which the sufferers find almost pleasure, and from which they will not descend. And thus they may shroud themselves in their grief, and discard every thing which would divert them from its contemplation,—and indulge in a fond and sentimental reverie, which they may almost imagine it a desecration to disturb.

This is not unfrequently the case with women whose minds are sensitive, but weak, and who seem to make a merit of giving way to sorrow. But it is a perversion of feeling, not its consequence. For that sentiment is in reality most intense that does not indulge itself in expression; that grief most affecting that is not selfish; that emotion most noble and sublime that elevates not to ecstasy, but to exertion,—that does not spend itself in weeping over a tomb, or in

wailing a coronach, but sends the mourner forth in modest, quiet, unobtrusive sorrow, to encounter again the trials of life, and to fulfil its obligations.

CHAPTER IX.

ON FEMALE ROMANCE.

The sensitive mind discovers poetry every where. As it is touched with whatever is affecting in the chances of life, so does it taste whatever is picturesque in the objects of nature. All that is majestic and lovely here is to it a source of delight, and helps it to form a more just conception of him who is the Author of so much beauty. It is thus that in the images of earth may be recognised the tokens of eternity,—in the canopy of heaven, and the expanse of the ocean,—in the setting glories of the sun, and in the melting colors of the rainbow, — visions and emblems of a brighter world.

And the emotions thus excited are very good for us. They are the dews that refreshen the heart; and prepare it for spiritual culture. They are the voice of God speaking to us in his

works, and demanding our affections and our service.

The mere affecters of sentiment have, however, no capacity for deep feeling. They may travel over the world to support their pretensions; may scale the Alpine range, and tread the Hesperian shore, and stand upon the ruins of the Capitol: but they feel no kindling of spirit, no soft and sad reminiscence,—they have no object but to compose a journal or to embellish an album.

Thus it is sometimes with young women to whom the common-places of sentiment are familiar; who are fluent in expression, and ready with their pencil, and who affect pathos, and study the picturesque. They have, perhaps, made a pilgrimage to St Peter's, or a tour to the Lakes; they have sailed on the bay of Naples, or have sketched Windermere: they talk of nothing but 'the eternal city,' or of autumnal tints; and we are alternately wearied by their bad drawings and their worse taste.

Not, however, that their sentimentality is altogether affected. On the contrary, they often feel at the moment all that they express; and though

their rhapsodies may be transient, they are genuine. Woman is naturally susceptible, and especially so when her imagination is excited, and when fancy as well as feeling is encouraged to expatiate in the region of romance. It is for this reason she is so susceptible of the charms of verse. Perhaps there are few young women who have not, at some time or other, invoked the muse, and who have not in their portfolios the fragments of an address to Phœbus, or of an ode to Cynthia.

And it may be said that theirs is a harmless passion, and at least does not deserve our censure. But there is always danger in fictitious feeling. It is always to be apprehended, lest those devotees of song should poetise real life; lest the same exaggeration which converts a pond into a lake, and a shrubbery into a forest, should sometimes transform a gardener into an Orlando.

Nor does any thing bring sentiment so much into discredit as its caricature. It is easy to assume the eccentricities of genius, to affect abstraction, and to apostrophise the moon. But we would almost rather that a young woman

had no poetical taste, than that she were always inditing sonnets or reciting Lord Byron.

We must not mistake affectation for taste in any thing. The one always leads to silliness and extravagance—the other teaches us to appreciate true beauty.

It is the same with the fine arts as with poetry. Real enthusiasm in both generally leads to excellence; but the affectation of sentiment is the symptom of a weak mind. To be perpetually discussing Canova and Chantry, or referring to the Louvre or the Vatican,—to be in ecstasies with every bit of broken marble, and to trace an original in every dirty picture,—may amaze the ignorant and credulous, but is, in reality, very absurd. They who know most can tolerate such pretension; and it is much to be regretted when young persons read, take lessons, and travel, not that they may acquire what is valuable, or observe what is really important, but because it is fashionable to affect and display an interest in every subject of feeling and taste.

Besides the danger is, lest a similar extravagance be evinced elsewhere, and lest an abuse or affectation of sentiment on all points be sub-

stituted for real feeling. Nothing, for instance is more to be apprehended than such a mistake with regard to religion. The influence of romance, indeed, here is very dangerous. Not that we are to be insensible to the beauty of the Christian system, nor that our perception of it should not mix with and heighten our devotional impressions; but the danger is, lest we mistake our admiration of it for our reception of its truths, and a mere intellectual excitement for spiritual fervor.

Eloquence, poetry, even music, and the fine arts, may be appliances of religion; nor, though we ought to be jealous of their influence, is it necessary that we should exclude them. The poetry of Scripture, the eloquence and harmony of nature, our very constitution, prove that these are intended to be links in the chain which is to draw our hearts to heaven.

But, then, there is not unfrequently cause to suspect that it is the poetry, not the truth, of the Gospel of which the heart is enamored. It melts under an appeal—it is touched by the impassioned eloquence of the pleader;—it yields not to his arguments, but to his persuasion.

Could he have been equally pathetic on any other subject, he would have been equally successful.

Such impressions are generally transient. They evaporate in a few tears;—and a compliment to the sermon, and a complacent recollection of the sensibility it excited, are its sole result.

But there may be a more permanent, yet equally illusive, affection. Religious enthusiasm is often nothing more than religious romance. It is the consequence of some vivid impression on the fancy or the feeling, without a proportionate conviction of the understanding; or, at any rate, without an accurate knowledge of scriptural truth.

Sudden conversions are on this account suspicious; not because they are unlikely, but because they are too often unreal. If the fire from heaven has often shot like lightning through the soul and at once purified and absorbed its affections, there has been, not unfrequently, a less etherial spark, whose brilliancy has dazzled and misled them. And women are very prone to be thus deceived. They are sud-

denly struck with the poetry of religion, and yield to it at once a sentimental and enthusiastic homage. And there is so much apparent fervor in their piety, that we cannot dare to think it unreal; there is so much tenderness and devotedness in their service, that we scruple to question its sincerity.

Yet self-deception may be carried to a great extent. There is very much to excite in religion; there are the glowing imagery and the touching simplicity of Scripture; the pathetic story and the sublime purpose of the Gospel; its affecting developement and awful catastrophe; and these things address themselves so powerfully to the imagination and the heart, and independently of spiritual influence so affect them, that we can scarcely wonder that impressions thus excited should impose on many, because they bear all the appearance of being genuine. Yet they may be only the tribute which sensitive minds must pay to poetry every where; and their inadequacy proves that Christianity is something more than a mere matter of taste and feeling, and that it implies the operation of Divine Grace.

Even where this grace is accorded, there is still room for mistake. Christians may not clearly distinguish their own impressions; they may not discriminate between what is innate and what is implanted;—between a constitutional bias and an infused principle;—between natural sensibility and religious feeling. And they may thus be betrayed into a thousand errors.

Female romance finds ample room for indulgence in the religious visions of the present day. The mystic trance, the unknown tongue, the pretended miracle, as they are the creation, so are they the aliment of enthusiasm. There is something so exciting in being transported beyond common-place incidents, — in being no longer fettered by physical possibilities, — in being ourselves the expectants, if not the actual recipients, of extraordinary powers, — that one can scarcely wonder at a credulity at once so flattering and so delightful. One almost scruples to disturb so delicious a reverie, and to bring down the Quietist from her ambrosial cloud,—but that one cannot but apprehend some danger from her flight. Perhaps, indeed, it might be better

to let her rhapsodise undisturbed; for time must break the enchanted glass: and if, with the destruction of her visions, reason and religion resume their sway, she will be glad to return to the practice of known duty, and to substitute simple truth for subtle phantasies.

Enthusiasm is not unfrequently a mere animal fever, which is perpetually nursed by stimulants, when it ought to be allayed by sedatives. It is a wandering of mind, bordering on delirium, which exaggerates realities, and embodies shadows, and yet has a painful consciousness of its own aberrations. For the enthusiast has often her misgivings, which are, indeed, the best symptoms of her state. They are as lucid intervals which indicate returning reason. And happy will she be when her malady subsides; and when, instead of seeing visions, and hearing voices, and mistaking phantoms for celestial forms, she submits once more to the simplicity of Scripture, and walks once more quietly and humbly with her God.

There are female visionaries from whom one cannot but anticipate such a termination. They are so good and so sincere, their feelings are

so tender, their hearts so affectionate, and their piety so warm; they have so sweet, and kind, and heavenly a spirit, that though we must fear that they have erred very far from the truth, we cherish the persuasion that they will soon return. They deserve our esteem, our love, and, as far as may be, our sympathy; and if, in spite of their gentleness, their creed is exclusive, and they scruple not to question the safety of those who, in any degree, differ from them, let it, on the other hand, be our care so to act, that, in whatever else they may think us deficient, they may learn from us a lesson of charity.

But let not their zeal or their amiability prevail with us to entertain their errors. It may, indeed, require some firmness to resist them; we may admire their piety, and prize their good opinion; we may even feel that their appeal is not without power; but let us bring their doctrines to the test of Scripture, and if they will not stand this scrutiny, let nothing prevail on us to entertain them.

We are safe only when truth is the object of our affections, and when we find in it satisfaction and delight. And surely it affords

enough for the most ardent mind. Is there not in the Gospel every thing that is sublime? Is there not in God, as he is there revealed, every thing to engage our hearts?

Why then should we look for him where he is not? He has walked in the form of man: he has spoken in the language of earth, and he now appeals to our human feelings, and asks our reasonable service.

Religion is, indeed, not a mere system. It is full of sentiment and love; a sentiment that calms and a love that occupies the soul. And happy, only, is the woman who experiences these, who finds in the assurance of the Divine sympathy, and in her love to God a cordial to her spirit, an anodyne to her griefs, and a stimulus to her hopes. Duty then loses all its irksomeness, for it is the tribute of love; and the Christian rejoices in a sense of that union which binds her, in grateful dependence, to the Giver of all good.

And, as though not insensible to present blessing, nor ungrateful for present refreshment, she feels the lurking thorn in every thing connected with earth, she therefore dwells with

greater delight on the prospect of a happier world. She tastes whatever there is of God here, and looks for the full and perfect manifestation of him in his immediate presence.

CHAPTER X.

FEMALE EDUCATION.

It is a good sign of the advance of society when attention is paid to the education of women. The youth of the other sex commonly monopolise all the care of a rude people, and the female child is left to acquire as she may the little menial arts, which are to be her perpetual and exclusive employment. And even when war and the chase have given place to intellectual pursuits, it is long before woman reaps the advantage. Her beauty is still considered her sole claim to regard, and her mind is thought incapable of culture, or not worth the pains.

The increased attention bestowed upon female improvement is a proof of the superiority of the modern to the ancient civilized world. We hear of one or two gifted women in Greece and Rome,—of Sappho, and of Aspasia, and of Porcia; but the generality were consigned to the distaff, and were never thought

of in connection with any more elevated employment.

One might almost say, at present, that the error lies in the contrary extreme;—not that too much thought or pains can be bestowed on female education, but that too much is sometimes attempted in it, and too much expected from it. Education is indeed very influential, but it cannot do everything. It may mould, but it seldom transforms, character; it may evoke, but it cannot originate; it improves, but it does not create. And as with regard to religion, education can do nothing without a higher influence; so, in other respects, its operation will be much affected by constitutional bias and natural capacity.

However contrary to the theory of some, it is very evident that there is an innate moral and intellectual bias, which contributes greatly to the formation of individual character. It is in the mind as in the body; there is a peculiarity in each which no training can take away, which is observable, not only in those pre-eminently distinguished, but in all. For all have their peculiar aspect, as well as their general resemblance;

and we need not be indebted to physiognomical or phrenological science for a truth which experience and observation sufficiently discover.

It is, perhaps, one of the faults of modern education, and especially of that of women, that this difference is sometimes overlooked. There are now a system and a routine, to which every girl must be subjected. A few years ago, this was by some extended even to bodily discipline; and we have heard of delicate females being sent out with their brothers with perforated shoes, that they might be inured to hardships, which they would probably in after life never have to encounter.

The folly of such conduct was evident from its results: it was a mania that lasted only for a while (till Emile was forgotten); but it is easier to discern a physical than a moral error, and much easier, too, to correct it.

We may often see instances of a similar mistake in the intellectual treatment of young people of the present day, especially in matters of mere taste. Yet, in these, we must allow that nature is peculiary arbitrary. There are some who can see no beauty in a Claude, — there are others

who can hear, unmoved, the death-song of Weber; still music and painting are deemed so essential, that every young woman must handle a pencil, or strike the harp. How many a poor girl is, in this way, doomed to symphonise three or four hours every day, to play without an ear, and to sing without a voice; and, after many years of irksome drudgery, to discover that her soul was not tuned to harmony, and that all her meritorious exertions cannot supply natural defects.

Music and drawing are very delightful, but they are surely not essential. A woman may be very good, very clever, very pleasing, without them; nay, much more pleasing than when she is, as it were, forced into their service, and made to affect a taste. For then there will be a perpetual display of some labored studio, or some double octave bravura, the only merit of which is its painful execution. And for a woman to play and draw only a little is equally distressing to her friends and to herself; for they are constrained to admire, and she to execute, in spite of the consciousness of insincerity on the one hand, and of failure on the other.

The loss of time which these useless efforts involve is, perhaps, their least evil. To force the inclination in things indifferent has a bad moral effect. Constrained studies are seldom successful; and, frequently, the error is universal, and pervades the system. Certain things are to be acquired, certain rules observed, whatever be the ability, taste, or temper. Natural inferiority, instead of feeling itself assisted, is, not unfrequently, wholly discouraged by this unbending routine; and the innate and peculiar talent, if such there be, languishes for want of culture. Still more lamentable is the effect on disposition. How often is irritability the consequence of wounded sensitiveness; and how often does the severity which may be requisite to restrain the impetuous, freeze and paralyse the diffident and tender! Many a gentle spirit has been crushed; many a feeling heart chilled; many an amiable disposition rendered fretful and peevish, by a want of sympathy in instructors.

It would be far more wise to study the peculiarities of temper and talent, and to adapt our treatment accordingly. It is surely not desir-

able that the characters of all young women should be as uniform as is their hand writing; and it is as absurd to attempt universal conformity of mind as it is of mode. To make no allowance for moral and intellectual difference is, indeed, a greater mistake, than for a little woman to adopt a French coiffure, or a plain woman a conspicuous dress, merely in compliance with fashion.

On the other hand, how much may be effected by a tender and judicious treatment! How may the timid be encouraged, and the languid stimulated, and the latent spark of genius fanned! How may even the dull be roused to exertion, and be made to feel, at least, sympathy, in what is refined and intellectual!

Adaptation is indeed the great secret in education;—adaptation to circumstance as well as to character, and, one might almost say, to inclination as well as to ability. For, though there is a danger in over-indulgence in this respect, there is even more danger in over restraint; and if the favorite exercise of the mind be not prejudicial, it is surely better to encourage and direct than to thwart it. It is, as in the choice of

a profession; — few rise to eminence whose wishes are counteracted, — so few attain proficiency in that to which they are strongly disinclined. And though this may be but an excuse for indolence, and, of course, must, in such cases, be over-ruled, it may, too, be an intuitive instinct, whose intimations, at least, merit attention. For as the appetite often points out what the stomach will bear, so the taste often indicates what the intellect will master.

The education of women should of course, be strictly feminine. Yet this affects more the manner than the matter of instruction; for it is not so much what is taught, as the way in which it is taught and the use made of it, that determines character. Knowledge, in itself, has no tendency to make a woman unfeminine, any more than it has to make a man proud; but it is the self-sufficiency which is sometimes instilled as its accompaniment, which produces assumption and conceit in the one case, and arrogance in the other.

Perfect acquirement demands time and application; and it has this good effect, that while it satisfies and fixes the mind, it does not cheat

it into a false estimate of its own powers. On the contrary, superficial knowledge dazzles by the rapidity of its attainment; and while it impresses us with a notion of our own superiority, leads us to despise those who have travelled by slower steps. It is thus that young women sometimes entertain an overweening idea of their own talents. They are, as the phrase is, well educated; that is, they have been taught a great many things, and they think to impress others with the same opinion of their proficiency with which they delude themselves.

It is, indeed, no wonder that young women should be so very clever now-a-days. There are so many helps to learning, and steps to Parnassus; there are so many pioneers to plane the way, that it is a libel any longer to call it steep. If grammar be dry and abstruse, its necessity is superceded; —if the dictionary be irksome, there is the interlined translation;— if the classic author be obscure and ponderous, there is the lucid paraphrase, and the elegant abridgment. Be the nut ever so hard, the kernel is extracted. Our very babes may suck the sweets of Froissart, Robertson, and Hume, and

follow with infantile curiosity the retreat of the Ten Thousand.

Youth is now such a very busy time; there are so many languages that must be learnt; so many accomplishments that must be mastered; so many sciences with which we must be familiar. A little while ago, French was a rare acquirement, but what girl now does not sigh with Filicaja, or weep with Klopstock? The versatility of female talent is, indeed, abundantly, improved. Master succeeds to master, and class to class. The day of the scholar, like that of the instructer, is parcelled out into hours; and the sixth portion of each, which is cribbed by the former to run to a new pupil, is not unfrequently all that is allowed to the latter to prepare for a new teacher.

It is well that mechanics can assist; that the inclination of the hand may be given by the cheiroplast, and the intricacies of time defined by a pendulum, and the problems of perspective resolved by a lens. Could the modern schoolroom be preserved like the saloons of Pompeii, it might pass in succeeding centuries for a refined inquisition. There would be found stocks

for the fingers, and pulleys for the neck, and weights and engines of suspicious form and questionable purpose; and, in spite of all our vaunts of philanthropy, we might pass in future ages for the inventors of ingenious tortures.

But for what end is all this apparatus? It is certainly very right that knowledge should be simplified, that the child of the nineteenth century should profit by its illumination, and that little girls, instead of poring out their eyes at embroidered frames, should be treated as moral and intelligent beings. But where there is such over-feeding, is it possible that there can be digestion? Where there is such an anxiety to impart brilliancy, is it not for display rather than for use?

It is quite different with boys. They are still kept, for the most part, to their old drudgery. They must still fight their way through classic lore, through crabbed grammars, and corrupt texts; they must still go to Aristotle for logic, to Newton for science, to Thucydides and to Livy for history; and though they are assisted in their difficult path by the labors of past and present generations, they must still work hard

before they can reap the fruit. And better far that they should do so; that they should never avail themselves of Valpy's translations or of Hamilton's keys, but that they should encounter the fag of the student before they can carry off the glory of the scholar.

It would be well if the same principle were acted on with regard to girls; if their education were more solid and less flashy, and if, instead of sipping like butterflies at every flower, they laid in a store of useful learning for future use. For it is not to glitter in a sunbeam, and display a ceaseless variety of gay and gaudy colors, that woman should be educated, but to occupy her station with grace, and to fulfil its duties with humility.

Yet this is often too much forgotten in the whirl of employments which constitute the education of many young women. They are allowed no time to think. They acquire mechanically; and the object proposed to them is, not the satisfaction resulting from knowledge, nor its intrinsic value, but to outvie their compeers, and to shine in society.

A littte girl is in this way often, from her infan-

cy, trained to exhibit. She competes for the prize in the morning concert, and glitters in a silver medal, the envy of her class. In the evening she shows off to an admiring circle, and her little heart dances time to her fingers, as she listens to the applauding whispers which her execution evokes. Her infantile sketches lie upon her mother's table; and when she is summoned from her school-room, it is to play her last concerto to Mrs A., or to show her portfolio to Lady B. And can we wonder that the same habits should continue? *Mauvaise honte* will, indeed, seldom incommode her: she may think it interesting to affect a tremor, or she may be really disturbed when a more gifted competitor carries off the palm; but her own success will ever be her object, and she will be continually on the look out for opportunities of display. Good sense or natural diffidence may correct the error; but if the modest blush ever mantle in her cheek, if she ever shrink from exhibition, it is not her education which is in fault.

May we not to this system ascribe many of the errors of future conduct? May we not trace its effects in the different developments

of female vanity? Exhibition becomes a habit which is not easily thrown aside; and its desire must in some way or other, be gratified. It not unfrequently continues even when a better principle has been infused, and leads even religious women to step out of their sphere, and to be as ambitious of display on spiritual subjects as others are on worldly ones. And that it is that sometimes makes them not unwilling to be themselves the propagators of new opinions, for they are more anxious to attract attention than scrupulous as to the means of doing so. It is hard to give up what we have been from our infancy accustomed to, to forego a cordial which has been so perpetually administered, to be content with a quiet fulfilment of duties which bring with them no notoriety, when we have been always fed by the stimulus of praise. Yet such duties are a woman's province, and for these she should be educated. It is no more desirable that she should shine in religious debate than that she should glitter in a gay assembly; and if the latter be vain or unprofitable, the former is unsuitable and unfeminine.

But we are too apt to overlook the end of education,—that it is the formation of character, not the mere acquirement of knowledge, that is its legitimate purpose.

What a woman knows is comparatively of little importance to what a woman is. Let her mind be enlarged, and her information accurate; let her excel, if possible, in all that she does attempt, and we would find no fault with her if her accomplishments be but few.

How delightful it is to meet with such a one, whose mind is well stored with useful information, who is capable of tasting intellectual beauty, and of deciding with discretion in the emergencies of life, and who is, withal, destitute of pretension. And, on the contrary, what a sad specimen of folly it is, when a young woman is taught all conceivable accomplishments; and when their very number precludes the possibility of proficiency in any. She can trace Chinese figures in black and white, sketch butterflies in Indian tinting, accomplish a few romances on the guitar, a few waltzes on the piano-forte; she talks bad French, and worse Italian; but she has no taste, no love of know-

ledge, no real desire for improvement; her mind is a mere blank; she might as well have been employed (like her grandmothers of old) in copying receipts in half-text, or working Adam and Eve upon a sampler.

It is the same in every thing. Lessons are considered the sum of education. And though it is certainly very right to have a *memoria technica* for dates, and a rhyme for the signs of the zodiac; there is more to be learnt in history than facts, and in science than terms. It is the use and application of knowledge that demands our chief attention.

What a mistake is the system we complain of with regard to religion! Yet, even in serious families, there is often too much of dry routine in religious instruction. It is communicated too much as a task, which is to be learnt, repeated, and then thrown aside. Whereas the principle should pervade every thing. Religion should be the star to gild the young child's path, and to give zest even to her little pleasures. It should be the sunbeam to warm her tender heart, and cause it to expand towards its Creator. It should be the spring, the paramount influence,

the guide, the incentive. It should be inculcated with all the affectionate sympathy of its Divine teacher, and applied with all that gentle earnestness, which wins and subdues the infant mind, and chains it with the cords of love to its instructer.

We may make the Bible a class-book, and weary our children with Scripture, but we shall never make them love religion in this way. The probability is, that when the school-room trammels are thrown off, they will throw aside its instructions, and will scarcely think themselves fully emancipated till they have forgotten all that was taught there.

Youth is the season for fixing habits. We are very careful that our children should acquire no awkward tricks, that their figures should be correctly modelled, their manners well formed, and their movements gracefully regulated; but we are not always sufficiently careful as to the habitual tone and temper of their minds. Yet do we not find that the propensities that are the soonest acquired are always the most inveterate, and that the bias, the taste, the complexion, the temperament, are,

for the most part, determined in very early years?

To induce the love as well as the habit of occupation, — to excite an interest, at the same time that we accustom to study, — should be our continual endeavor; and, whilst we deprecate the charlatanism that would teach every thing by cards and counters, we should relieve, as much as possible, the irksomeness of the task. And this can only be done by being ourselves in earnest. Nothing is so infectious as enthusiasm of all kinds, and especially to young people. Children naturally imbibe the feelings of their parents. The little girl who is brought up in the country, and who sees those around her interested in its occupations, dreams of snowdrops and primroses, and thinks no plaything so delightful as a spade and a parterre. And, in like manner, if she is sure that her instructers themselves care for her progress, if she can believe that they sympathise with her, she naturally shares in their ardor, and almost intuitively acquires whatever they may wish to teach.

We may learn, in this, from our Divine instructer. He became man that he might teach

men; and we must identify ourselves with our children, if we would gain their interest. We must condescend to their little emotions;—sympathise in their simple impressions, recall our own young feelings, and live over again our early years, if we would mould them to our wishes, and make them regard us as their friends. Nor does this require so much devotion as might be imagined. Some mothers err a little in this respect. One would scarcely find fault with a parent for giving up too much time to her children; yet children are not the only objects of a mother's regard, and by her making them so, she may in some measure defeat her own wishes. The probability is, that she will render them selfish and dependent, and disqualify them from coping with those who have been nurtured with less tenderness. For as the skilful gardener knows when it is better that nature should do her own work, so does the judicious parent feel that children should sometimes be left to try their own strength, and should neither expect nor need assistance.

It is the fault not merely of indulgent, but of over-anxious parents, to treat their children too

much as first objects. This is evident from their earliest years. And the little creatures are very quick at discerning their own importance. Their sayings are repeated, their talents lauded, their pleasures studied. They are suffered to interrupt and to interfere; and, though we cannot perhaps say that they are rude, we must feel that they are very troublesome. And where this treatment is pursued in childhood, it is generally continued in adolescence. The young people are the perpetual theme; their success is blazoned as if it were without precedent,—and we are wearied with hearing of their prizes or their prospects. Yet all this must have a very bad effect upon their future character; for they soon fancy themselves all that their partial friends imagine,—and then they must either learn a bitter lesson from a harsh and censorious world, or prop themselves up in their own good opinion by an extra portion of conceit.

It is, of course, the first care of religious parents to prepare their children for their eternal state; but it is by fitting them to fill their relations here that they will best educate them for immortality. Besides the mere communication

of religious truth, of what importance is it to regulate the temper, and to direct the mind! How many pious persons have cause to regret their own inconsistencies; the consequence, perhaps, of irritability contracted in childhood, which in maturer years it is very difficult to correct. How often have they to lament their own inertness, the natural effect of early indulgence, which wastes and deadens the intellectual faculties, and disqualifies them for future effort. And though they may struggle against such evils, and by Divine grace may be able to overcome them, they always find that bad habits are their worst enemies, and that it is much more easy to discern than to correct them.

Amiability, intelligence, and an absence of affectation, are the most delightful features in female character; and those which, next to religious principle, it is the business of education to impart. And if we would wish our children to be loved as well as admired, and esteemed as well as loved; if we would render them happy here, fortify them against the changes of life, and fit them for its close, we must endeavor to engraft these qualities upon the solid basis of

Christian truth. Religious parents will, of course, always look to a higher influence, and will feel the inadequacy of all human effort; but they will, nevertheless, diligently sow the seed, in humble hope; or rather, in full assurance that it will be watered from above.

CHAPTER XI.

FEMALE DUTIES.

It is not to be denied that Christianity is a practical principle. Nor is it to be denied that it is the only principle that ensures satisfactory practical results. Its morality is perfect, because it is universal, and because it is the natural consequence of its truths.

No woman can fulfil her social duties without being religious. We need not search antiquity for exceptions to this remark. Examples of female virtue were then sufficiently rare; and, where they did occur, the case was different. The woman who throws off religion now, as it were, invites temptation; and though worldly considerations may induce decorum and correctness, these are only negative virtues. Even where natural amiability so far prevails as to dispose to kind or benevolent effort, it is but a weak principle, apt to yield to the impulse of selfishness, and influential only when not opposed by any more potent feeling.

Christianity is practical throughout: it is so in its religious as well as in its moral obligations. It is not a mere creed, nor a mere system; but a simple, sincere, practical service, intelligible to all; which all may render, and which approves itself to the conscience as the only tribute worthy of God.

Yet the fault of the religion of ordinary persons is its insincerity. Not that they are intentionally disingenuous; but they admit a casuistry in religion which they would not tolerate in any thing else.

How insincere, for instance, is that modish religion which appears, on a Sunday, in its holiday attire, and of which no vestige remains after the first service of the day is concluded; or that periodical religion which looks prim and demure at certain seasons, and which, having fasted on Good Friday, and knelt at the table on Easter Sunday, reverses the popish order, and keeps its carnival the ensuing week. Or that sentimental religion which sheds a few tears at a moving discourse, and falls into hysterics at a pathetic description, and sighs and looks beautiful, especially when the preacher is

young and handsome; but which has no solitary contrition, feels no real penitence, and lasts only to the church door. Or indeed every religion which does not imbue and determine character, and become, as it were, a second nature, silently but sensibly influencing the detail of conduct.

It is not always easy to detect what is counterfeit. There may be much ardour even in spurious sentiment. We may be struck by glowing oratory, an apostolic profile, a melodious voice, a touching manner. We may be so deeply affected, that we question not the genuineness of our emotion; and the excitement may be repeated till it becomes habitual and necessary, and we cherish it as we would any other soft and tender agitation. Yet, though it may assume many different phases, though it may become visionary and eccentric, and its very extravagance may seem to guarantee its sincerity, its practical results are not such as to identify it with real feeling. It is vague, and desultory, and capricious; it is feverish and fickle: it is like the hectic flush, which outvies in brilliancy the hue of health, but whose very brightness is symptomatic of disease.

Real religion is full of repose. It is not indolent and inactive, but it is not restless. Its fervor is so calm and constant that it attracts little notice. It has not the vividness of the electric flash, but it burns like the beacon-light, and is as cheering and salutary.

Yet, though quiet, it is earnest. Some women deprecate the bustle of busy housewives, and imagine themselves privileged to do nothing. And, in like manner, some, condemning the extravagance of a few visionaries, think that the more cold and formal their piety, the better. They measure it by its remoteness from fanaticism; and, because they would have it unostentatious, they take care to conceal it altogether. They may be punctilious in outward observance, but they are ever on their guard against excitement; and from their extreme care lest they should be led away by feeling, it is exceedingly difficult to discover that they feel at all.

Yet these are the very persons who need be under no apprehension They are too cold-blooded to be ever enthusiastic, too calculating to incur risk, too inert to be extravagant. They are so dull, that to see them interested about

any thing beyond a question of dress, or of household arrangement, would be a relief. But they are as dead in religion as in every other matter of feeling; and though they will join in a tirade against spiritual excess, they are unimpressible to every appeal that would excite to spiritual fervor.

Religion must be an absorbing principle. It is not enough to talk about it, or to read about it, or to range ourselves on one side or other of theological debate. We may be such exclusive advocates for morality, that we may seem to attach almost merit to its performance; or we may be so scriptural in our language, and so lucid in our views, that none may be able to challenge our profession; yet we may be far from real Christianity. Our zeal for good works may, perhaps, be only a cloak for practical antinomianism, and our orthodoxy may be merely speculative. Women have little, indeed, to do with controversy of any kind; and though it is much the fashion at present for them to stand in the front, to throw the missiles, and invite the combat, it would be more decorous, as well as more politic, that they should withdraw altogether from the

field.. They may seem to serve the tactics of rival leaders by skirmishing in the van, and parties may thus try their strength without hazarding their honor; but women are, in reality, but weak champions, and nothing can be worse for themselves than to be thus engaged. It is only their defensive armor that need be proof, lest they should be harrassed even in their retired position; and their religion should be so sound and practical, that though it does not render them conspicuous, it may ensure their safety. And they should be so blameless in their conduct, and so active in their discharge of social duty, that they may prove the genuineness of their principles; and that by these criteria, not by interference in what is altogether unsuitable, their zeal and their proficiency may be estimated.

These are, indeed, the test of real piety. No one must fancy herself religious, who is careless of moral obligations. She may be perpetually engaged in the discussion of duty, and liberal in her application of incentives; she may not even shrink from the reproach of religion, nor from public exertions in its behalf; but she is greatly

in the wrong, if she imagines that any of these things can compensate for want of attention to the minutiæ of social conduct. The source of religion is the heart, and it radiates through the system; and though its diverging beams strike upon remote objects, they must fall first on those that are nearest to the centre.

The domestic circle may exhibit some of the most beautiful developments of female piety, and it affords opportunities to the youngest Christians to evidence their religion. It is, however, often not till experience teaches the fickleness of other attachments, that we prize the fidelity of family love. It is not till we see how small a matter separates friends, how soon ambition breeds rivalry, and rivalry coldness and distrust, that we rightly estimate that tenderness which, in spite of perversity and neglect, watches over us, and is never weary on our behalf; encouraging our confidence, and welcoming our affection. It is not till we have experienced the selfishness of others, that we prize the disinterestedness of our parents. And sometimes, alas! our sense of their value is too late. It is when they can no longer receive

and we no longer pay, the tribute of affection. It is when they are beyond the reach of all earthly sentiments, and we are left to the cold mercies of a heartless world. Few, perhaps, are the children who do not mourn over deficiencies in filial piety; who do not recall, with tender sorrow, the poor return they made to an ever-wakeful love; and who, though they may have rendered all that decorum required, do not sicken at the recollection of what they might have done, but failed to do, to soothe, to comfort, and make glad, the hearts that now have ceased to beat. And how sad is it, that young Christians should ever forget or think light of this most important obligation; that they should ever be led by the fascination of more exciting services to forget a duty which is close at hand, about which there can be no question, and for which there may be no future opportunity! Let them bear with a little impatience, for it may be only over-anxiety for them. Let them bear with a little dullness, for, if they had been damped by so many disappointments, they would be dull too. Let them not count a few sacrifices dear, nor grudge their

time, or their attention; nor neglect to reciprocate the tenderness which is lavished and centered upon them.

Young women are especially called to this delightful duty. It is their's to fill the place of such as are earlier summoned from the parental home, sometimes to supply their deficiencies, and to compensate for their faults. And can any claim be more imperative? May not the minutest attention, affectionately rendered, be as much a fulfilment of duty, and as dear to God, as the more brilliant displays of erratic zeal?

Respect is the peculiar claim of parents, and to any failure in this they are very sensitive. How incumbent, then, is it on children to render that deference which is as much a right on one side as it is a duty on the other!

It is not a greater measure of spiritual light that can excuse undutiful or ungracious conduct. It is not even the conviction that we must sacrifice the lesser to the greater duty, and forsake father and mother for the Gospel's sake, that can justify the unnecessarily wounding the feelings of a parent. Remonstrance itself may be affectionate and respectful; and difference

of sentiment should be urged in so delicate a way that we may, at least, show that our religion has taught us to honor and value our natural instructers.

How often does experience give a useful though a somewhat bitter lesson! How often does it show us that what, perhaps, we once stigmatized as prejudice and lukewarmness, was only the result of chastened taste and moderated feeling; and that, if age sometimes fails to make allowance for the ardor of youth, it is the fault of youth to defer far too little to the judgment of age! How often may we afterwards find in the extravagance of others an apology for our parents' fears, and in our own mistakes a justification of their animadversions! And how often may young women, especially, learn that if they had trusted less to their own superficial knowledge, and had listened more to the counsels of experience,—if they had been less opinionative and more deferential,—they would have spared themselves the necessity of much retrograde movement, and many painful recollections of unimproved advice!

Filial piety has ever received its meed of approbation, and even poetry has not found a more affecting theme. We follow with tender interest the steps of the daughter of Œdipus, —we read with admiration of the constancy of Ruth,—we dwell with pleasure on the piety of Milton's children,—we delight in the legend of the Siberian exile; and do we, in every day life, meet with any more lovely and amiable character than that of the kind and dutiful and affectionate child?

There may be, indeed, many more exciting occupations—many more striking developments of religion—than the quiet discharge of filial attentions; there may be a consciousness of much greater sacrifice in the exercise of a diffused benevolence than in the routine of private duty; but though the first must not be undervalued, it is scarcely as certain an indication of real piety as the other. For it is when we see religion cementing natural ties, and nurturing family affection,—prescribing the little kindnesses, and the trifling sacrifices, which contribute so much to domestic comfort,—teaching to forego pleasure and society for the sake of ministering

to infirmity, and cheering the sad and solitary hour, — that we feel her to be most attractive, and learn to appreciate her real worth.

Young women should certainly consider domestic duties as paramount to eve y other social obligation; but these will, in general, not interfere with more extensive usefulness. On the contrary, those who are most exemplary at home are usually the best qualified and the most willing to do good on a larger scale.

There are many works of charity for which women, and even young women, are peculiary qualified; and it is therefore the more to be lamented that their benevolence is not always judiciously applied. What, for instance, can be more appropriate than assisting in schools, administering to the sick, or visiting, or reading to them under proper regulations and legitimate guidance? Women may, in this way, well contribute their mite of service; and if the result of such efforts be not very important, it will, at least, be beneficial to themselves.

But is it right in them to assume higher ground, — to arrogate to themselves the most important office, as well as the weightiest re-

sponsibility,—and to endeavor to supersede, rather than second, ministerial instruction! Is it right in them to go forth as the expounders of Holy Writ, — as the liberators of troubled consciences; and afterwards, perhaps, to expatiate on their own success, as if they had been the sole teachers? Or is it right in them to throw contempt upon a sacred office by dishonoring those who hold it, and to help to depreciate sanctions which it is the fault of the present day far too lightly to esteem? How much more amiable it would be to respect the order, even when unworthily represented; and, instead of giving just cause of complaint to authorised instructers by unkind censures and unwarrantable interference, to endeavor to conciliate their sanction and co-operation! For to them should be ever given the option, at least, of appearing as the originators as well as the promoters of benevolent designs.

Female exertions should be always strictly subordinate; and especially so, when there is no supineness on the part of legitimate teachers. Women should then, indeed, be scrupulously delicate; for, as probably there will be little assumption of authority in such a case, there

should be the more punctilious deference. Laborious ministers are often very meek and very sensitive; and they claim, on these accounts, the greater respect: yet are they not the very persons who are sometimes treated with the least consideration? Do not women, even, who perhaps owe to them the very elements of their religion, who have been encouraged by them to converse on spiritual subjects, and allowed to assist in their labors, often think themselves privileged to criticise what they are not called upon to judge—to interfere where they are not required—and to speak lightly of instructions which they do not know how to appreciate? How much more decorous and proper is that conduct which asks for guidance,—which, in the distribution of books or of relief, and in the application of all benevolent efforts, is neither officious nor opinionative, but is content to conform to whatever is pointed out, and modestly and quietly to execute it!

Respect to ministers is both a religious and a social duty; but one, unhappily, too little understood and practised. It is not that enthusiastic impulse which makes an idol of every thing

it admires,—which one day deifies the object of its attachment, and the next, decries and deserts him: nor is it that homage which talent, or eloquence, or even sometimes superior sanctity, may evoke. But it is respect for an order appointed by God, and a reverence for all that is lovely and of good report in those who adorn it. And it produces towards such, a consistent, steady respectful, and affectionate attachment, a filial feeling with regard to them, a submission to their authority, a deference to their judgment and a willingness to receive what they have to impart. It is a want of this sentiment that renders young women more fastidious than they are teachable, fonder of comparing the merits of different ministers than of listening to their instructions, and more ready to carp at what they do not like than to gather good from what they hear. It is a want of this sentiment that makes them fickle in their attachments, unsteady in their creed, ready to be ensnared by any new and unsound doctrine, and apt to affect the heresiarch themselves. And it is the same want that has sent them, at times, to their spiritual guides, not to be taught by them, but

to convince them of their errors,—not to consult them upon cases of conscience, but to enlighten them upon speculative points.

Yet all this is very lamentable; and we can scarcely wonder that some should be disposed to disallow to women, in these matters, the right of judgment at all, when it is occasionally so much abused. Dogmatism is bad in men, but it is infinitely worse in women; and, however it may be disguised by a pretty form and a soft manner, it is a blemish which, at once, strikes and offends the eye.

All that women do should be done modestly. They should not act the dictator in any thing, not even in matters of benevolence. It is very much the fashion to solicit their patronage, to give them the notoriety of office, and to invest them with a little authority. This may be politic on some accounts, and, in some cases, necessary; but charity, in its most unobtrusive form, is what is more becoming to female character. Women, at least, should never be meddling or important; and, if they must take the lead at female committees, or preside at tables at bazaars, they should do so with the least possible

display. We may, some of us, question altogether the propriety of young women offering their gay wares at a public mart, or exacting a guinea for every bauble; we may think that they might spend their time more profitably than in making heart's-ease pincushions, or wafer toys; but if they are to do these things, let them do them without effort or affectation. It is the importance assumed on such occasions that is the chief cause of offence.

It should be always considered the duty of women to be well and actively employed, and there is ample field for the most diligent. Let not, therefore, those who waste their time in doing nothing—who sit at home in indolence, reading a novel, or drawing a flower, or embroidering a workbag—excuse their own inertness by the officiousness of others. The one is far more defensible than the other: the one may be moderated or corrected, and its intention is its apology; but the other must be wholly overcome, for its principle is bad. The higher the rank, the greater the wealth, the more important it is that sympathy should be expressed, and charity exercised. Young women of whatever degree

should never shrink from personal effort. Neither should they think, when they do enter a cottage, or teach a school, that it is an act of condescension. It is certainly very right in them to be so employed, but it is an honor to them too; and they should ever remember, that it is the greatest privilege that attaches to superiority of any kind, to render its inferiors happy and at ease.

There is, perhaps, a greater sense of the duty now than there ever was. And, if so, why should there not be more effort? Why should not societies be every where established under ministerial sanction for the relief of the poor and the sick, and individual charity be thus concentrated and applied? In the detail of such societies, the assistance of women would often prove very valuable. They would, indeed, not be made the chief agitators; they would not be appointed to the most laborious or the most responsible offices; they would not be sent into districts where it is scarcely fit for modest women to appear; — but they would be directed in all cases of difficulty; and, instead of rambling about on a philanthropic crusade, they would have an

assigned sphere of usefulness, and a proper and subordinate duty. The sweet Quakeress has shown what a woman can do: there would be found many such, if they were only judiciously called into action.

Yet it may not be in the power of all women to devote very much time to active efforts. Those who are married are not independent, though it is very much the fashion to consider them so; and to their duties at home, all other social duties should be subordinate.

Obedience is a very small part of conjugal duty; and, in most cases, easily performed. Women have, indeed, not much cause to complain of their subjection; for, though they are apt very inconsiderately, to deliver up their right of self-control, they suffer from this rashness, on the whole, less frequently than might be expected. Ill-assorted marriages are certainly too common; but, important as the union is, and thoughtlessly as it is often contracted, it is only wonderful that there should not be a great deal more unhappiness resulting from it than we see to be the case.

Much of the comfort of married life depends

upon the lady: a great deal more, perhaps, than she is aware of. She scarcely knows her own influence; how much she may do by persuasion, —how much by sympathy, — how much by unremitted kindness, and little attentions.

To acquire and retain much influence, she must, however, make her conjugal duties her first object. She must not think that any thing will do for her husband, — that any room is good enough for her husband, — that it is not worth while to be agreeable, when there is only her husband, —that she may close her piano, or lay aside her brush, for why should she play or paint merely to amuse her husband? No! she must consider all these little arts of pleasing chiefly valuable on his account, — as means of perpetuating her attractions, and giving permanence to his affection. She must remember that her duty consists not so much in great and solitary acts, — in displays of the sublimer virtues, to which she will be only occasionally called; but in trifles, — in a cheerful smile, or a minute attention, naturally rendered, and proceeding from a heart full of kindness and a temper full of amiability.

There is one class of duties which, as it went out with our grandmothers, is now considered quite obsolete. We wonder, indeed, how these venerable ladies could be so familiar with the pantry, and yet never soil their petticoats; how they could preside over the culinary department, and be adepts in every domestic art, and yet be still as stately as their ruffles or brocade. Ladies were in those days accountable for every dish; they smiled with conscious triumph when the sauce was praised; they made current-wine, and raspberry vinegar; and their cupboards were stored with expressed juices and ingenious confections. But now there is something inelegant that attaches to the ménage. It is associated with making puddings, or mending stockings, or scolding servants. A good housewife is a good sort of bustling person, who has always a good dinner and a clean house; who jingles a bunch of keys, and gasps for an opportunity of replenishing your plate; and who looks at the head of her table, as if she should be in the kitchen.

The habits of a former age would certainly not be in keeping with the refinement of the present; and a lady may, no doubt, be better

employed than in superseding her servants. But there is no greater mistake than imagining that there is any thing derogatory in entering, when necessary, on even practical detail; or that it is not incumbent on every woman, whatever be her degree, to take care that these details are well conducted.

Ease is the distinction of true breeding. The most ladylike deportment is not inconsistent with perfect economy. It is delightful to see such a union: it conveys a tone to the whole establishment; and you feel assured that the dairy and the drawing room are equally in order.

But, on the contrary, there is no worse breeding than to be ashamed of any thing you may feel it to be your duty to do. 'Never blush, my love,' said the elegant Mrs Chapone to a young wife whom she detected making a tart, 'to do any thing which may please your husband, promote economy, or embellish your table.' It may be that your fortune does not allow your devolving on a house keeper the dispensing of your stores, or on a governess the care of your children; that you have no lady's maid to

make your caps, and no French cook to season your omelettes; and yet, if you are surprised in any of these little offices, you are sadly discomposed. You retire from your press, or send away your children, or secrete your work; just as if it were a breach of etiquette to be discovered any where but on a sofa, or doing any thing which is of any use.

And this affectation descends even to a lower rank. What can be more absurd than to dine at tables of very moderate establishments, to taste delicious confections, and to be quite sure that you are indebted for them to the lady of the house—that, at least, she made the jelly, and whisked the cream—and yet to know that she would blush to be suspected conversant with the ingredients of a single dish?

It must be confessed, that the ménage is not the most interesting part of female duty. Its detail is often trying. We feel that there are a great many things which we would rather not look into, a great many blemishes which we would rather not observe; that we would prefer, almost, the consciousness of a little disorder, to the annoyance of interfering to set things right;

and that, in short, we would often rather, ourselves, dust the table than ring the bell. But these are the little trials that devolve upon woman. They are her share of the burden, and she should, therefore not shrink from it. And they are common to all; for the lady of rank is as responsible for the good conduct of her establishment, as the poor man's wife is for the neatness of her cottage.

We are all sensible to the impressions which a want of order produces. A coup d'œil suffices. We are kept, for instance, in the first place, half an hour ringing at the bell; we are then ushered into a cold apartment by a blundering footboy or a slipshod maid, and are left to note its malarrangement whilst the lady of the house is adjusting her costume; and when, at last, we are allowed to pay her our compliments, we are concerned to discover that, in her haste to descend, she has left one papillote untwisted, and one unhappy cordon dangling at her side. We sympathise with the poor husband; and, in pity to his feelings, make a point of declining his invitation to dinner.

The consideration in which a woman is held

depends, however, much on these little points. A silver saucepan is not indeed, now, an item in the *corbeille de mariage*, nor do modern husbands wish that their ladies' boudoir, should be made a pastry room: but none are careless of the conduct of their house, or the arrangement of their table. None like to see the one in disorder, or the other ill-furnished. The commissariat department devolves upon the lady, and nothing goes on well if it is poorly supplied. A bad dinner has a bad effect upon the temper, even when there is, on the whole, a superiority to trifles. We have heard, indeed, of Sir Isaac Newton's insensibility to the abstraction of his chicken, and of his returning to his problem equally content without it; but we doubt whether any modern student would be as indifferent. Besides, husbands will sometimes bring home stray acquaintances to dinner; and why should they have, on such occasions, to blush for their wives' deficiencies?

A neglect of minute attentions is always a dangerous experiment. There is nothing so fatal to sentiment as discomfort. The love that is

whispered to an elegant young woman in a delicious parterre, is forgotten when she appears in a bedgown at the breakfast table, and dispenses to her shivering husband cold coffee and blue milk. How different his lot from that of the more privileged bachelor, whose nice housekeeper sets out his table, and never soils his carpet; and who, if tempted to leave his quiet habitation, and compare his solitary condition with the matrimonial felicity of his friend, finds the unhappy Benedick overwhelmed with children, and resigned to discomfort!

The most anxious, however, if not the most important duty of married life, is that which is due to children, and which, in their early years, principally devolves upon the mother. None can supply her place, none can feel her interest; and as, in infancy, a mother is the best nurse, so, in childhood, she is the best guardian and instructress. Let her take what help she may, nothing can supersede her own exertions. She must give the tone to character; she must infuse the principle; she must communicate those first lessons which are never forgotten,

and which bring forth fruit, good or evil, according as the seed may be.

Instruction is not without its trials. We have heard, in poetry, how delightful it is to 'rear the tender thought;' but we doubt whether any of us can altogether sympathize with the beau ideal of the bard. In spite of Bell and Pestalozzi, it must ever be a work of patience to teach grammar and orthography.

How needful, then, is a mother's interest! She may not be herself required to impart the elements of knowledge; but it is hers to give life to the system,—to regulate the temper,—to turn the little incidents of a child's life into so many useful lessons. It is hers to watch the early bias—to infuse into the lisping prattler a scrupulous regard to truth—to teach the first breathings of the infant spirit to ascend to heaven.

And well is her care repaid. On whom does the infant smile so sweetly as on its mother? To whom do the little boy and girl fly so naturally for sympathy as to their mother? And often, in after life, does not youth repose its confidence securely on a mother, and seek the

counsel of a mother's faithful heart, and hide its griefs in a mother's tender bosom? It is a delightful relationship; and if mothers would secure the love and respect of their children, they must not grudge their attentions to them in their earliest years. They must be willing to sacrifice a little amusement, or a little company, or a little repose, for the sake of nursing their infants, or teaching their children, or fulfilling, themselves, offices which, too frequently, they devolve on servants.

To accomplish, however, these duties a woman must be domestic. Her heart must be at home. She must not be on the look-out for excitement of any kind, but must find her pleasure as well as her occupation in the sphere which is assigned to her.

St Paul knew what was best for woman when he advised her to be domestic. He knew that home was her safest place; home her appropriate station. He knew especially the dangers to which young women are exposed, when, under any pretence, they fly from home. There is composure at home; there is something sedative in the duties which home involves. It affords

security not only from the world, but from delusions and errors of every kind. A woman who lives much at home, hears the rumors merely of conflicts which perplex and agitate all who are involved in them. Opinions are presented to her, not dressed up with all the witchery of eloquence, and fresh from the mouth of their propounder, but divested of extrinsic attractions, and in their true garb. She entertains them with a mind not fevered by excitement nor athirst for stimulus, but prepared to weigh every thing impartially, and pre-occupied by important themes.

How preferable is the quiet lot of such a—one, when really religious, to the most brilliant which this world can offer! She has set her footing on the Rock, and she will never be moved from it. Her faith is firm, as that on which it reposes. It is not that vague sentiment, which scarcely knows what it believes. It is not that fickle sentiment, which adopts the newest dogma, whatever it may be. It is not that vapid sentiment, which feels every thing or nothing, just as the world dictates. But it is a faith founded upon Scripture,—that bends to the authority of

Scripture, however set at nought,—that receives the doctrine of Scripture, however contemned,—that recognises the obligations of Scripture, however mystified or explained away. It is a faith which, conscious of its own weakness, rests on Almighty strength,—feeling its own wants, flies to Infinite sufficiency,—which with filial confidence carries its cares to the mercy-seat of Heaven, and rests assuredly on Him in whom it has believed.

And how will such a faith be evidenced? By composure under trials,—by a modest fulfilment of duty,—by a heavenly walk,—by a happy death. Yes! it is then that the Christian really triumphs! The spirit that has animated for a while the tabernacle of clay,—that has prompted to benevolence,—that has stimulated to self denial,—that has striven and struggled and suffered under its load of flesh,—then breaks from its prison and finds its repose. Then it meets with those with whom it long has held communion—whose temptations, and trials, and constancy, have been the same—and whose home will be the same forever.

And let it encourage the female Christian,

that many have preceded her in her godly course,—that Ruth, and Hannah, and Mary, and Dorcas, and Priscilla, and other holy women have led the way,—that they have striven, and have prevailed,—have believed, and been accepted,—that they have received their crown of glory, and are with the spirits of the just made perfect. And let her go, and be like them!

Sandford

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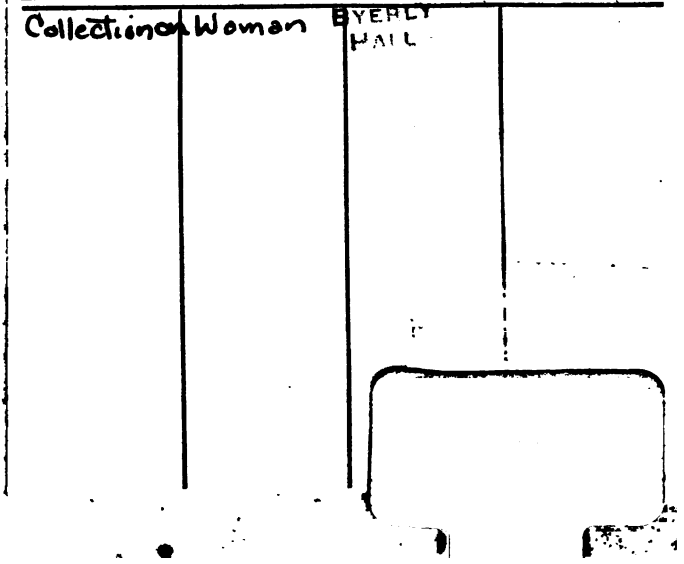
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